

WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL
West & Middle Chinnock Parish Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 10th July 2024

Cllr Cockrem – Acting Chair
Cllr Cawley
Cllr Griffiths

Cllr Ashton
Cllr James
Clerk: Kim Duller

- 24/1212** **Public Forum:** No members of the public were present.
- 24/1213** **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Bennett. Cllr Cockrem, Deputy Chair, chaired the meeting in Cllr Bennetts absence.
- 24/1213** **Declarations of Interest:** i) Cllr Cawley, Allotments, ii) Cllr Ashton, and Councillor for Crewkerne Town Council, Hinton St George Parish Council and Somerset Council. Member, National Farmers Union and National Association for Shooting and Conservation.
- 24/1214** **To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes from the Parish Council Meeting, 12th June 2024. Resolved. All in Favour.**
- 24/1215** **Matters Arising Not on Agenda:** None
- 24/1216** **Somerset Council, Councillors Report:** Cllr Hewitson confirmed that there had been very little action going on due to the general election, however offered support to the PC on any matters, should any arise. The PC confirmed the main issues at the moment were planning. Cllr Hewitson advised that Cllr Patrick could provide a report on planning issues. The Chair and PC thanked Cllr Hewitson for taking the time to attend the meeting, particular in light of attending 4 PC meetings in one evening.
- 24/1217** **Planning:**
- a. Applications:**
- i) Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock:** The Clerk confirmed that the additional comments from the Parish Council had been sent to the planning officer. There had been no further update on the planning portal. It was noted that the standing advice from Somerset Council that planning officers would not be available for any advice or guidance until 15th July still stands. This is due to capacity issues in the planning department and more significant projects are being prioritised. It was also confirmed there was a shortage of planning officers, enforcement officers and a replacement tree officer was not yet in post. **Action: Clerk to keep checking the planning portal for updates.**
- ii) Planning Application Notification 24/01134/TCA, to fell a Tree, Brook Barn, Lower Street, West Chinnock:** The Parish Council had sent further emails to the planning team to reiterate its concerns regarding the felling of trees where there was not enough evidence to support felling, particularly in the conservation area. The Clerk had liaised with Somerset Council, Cllr Patrick on this matter. He confirmed that he believed due diligence had taken place with regards to evidence being provided and also confirmed that Parish Councils do not have a say in the felling of trees and are only notified as consultees. Cllr Ashton confirmed that Hinton St George Parish Council also have the same concerns, which they have raised after the recent permission of 6 large trees to be felled in the conservation area. **Action: No action on this particular Tree, with the exception of gaining evidence for the felling, however further information and guidance is required by the Parish Council on the planning process for Tree felling and their responsibility as consultees.**

- b. **Determinations:** None
- c. **Planning Enforcement:**
 - i) **Smith's Hill:** It was reported that there was further progress on the building of the retaining wall. It was felt that there would not be enforcement officers checking the quality of the works due to capacity issues. It was agreed the priority should be to finish the development. **Action: Clerk to find out if enforcement checks are still taking place.**

24/1218

Finance:

- a. **To Approve Qtr 1 24/25 Accounts:** The accounts were not presented due to spread sheet issues. They will be circulated over the summer period as well as internally audited by N. Cochran.
- b. **To Approve Clerk Expenses Qtr1 £163.57:** Resolved. All in favour.
- c. **To Approve Clerk Additional hours and holiday pay Qtr1 Net £158.98:** Resolved. All in favour.
- d. **To Pay Somerset Landscapes: June Invoice SLL34758, £166.94 Inc VAT:** The Clerk had checked the dates with N. Cochran. Resolved. All in favour.
- e. **NALC updated Financial Regulations:** **Action: Clerk to liaise with Internal Auditor, Neil Cochran and report back at the September meeting.**
- f. **To Note: Double Payment of the Parish Council Insurance Premium to Clear Insurance and Refunded Payment £621.80:** The Chair explained the Clerk had paid the Insurance on behalf of the Parish Council via her credit card due to the potential of the PC being "out of insurance" over a weekend period at the beginning of June. She then also paid via bacs from the Parish Council account. The Clerks credit card was supposed to have been refunded from the insurance company however the payment went into the PC's bank account. The Clerk had subsequently been repaid from the PC.
- g. **Delegated Powers Payments and Previously Agreed Invoices:**
 - i. **Clerks Salary: June 2024 £380.77**
 - ii. **HMRC: £95.20**

24/1219

Allotments

- a. **Agreement to new Councillor Lead:** Cllr James was proposed as the new allotments Cllr Lead to replace Cllr Partridge who has now left the PC. **Proposed: Cllr Cawley seconded Cllr Griffith. Resolved. All in favour. Action: Cllr James to follow up on the Inspection which took place on 8th June 2024. Clerk and Cllr James to meet for an allotment briefing. As a matter of urgency, those allotments which need remedial action, the tenants should be followed up. Newsletter to be reinstated to keep allotment holders fully informed including confirmation of Cllr James as the new Cllr lead.**
- b. **A.O.B:** i. Cllr Cawley was concerned he had not heard from the latest new plot holder regarding his plot, however confirmed that a key for the gate had been issued. (Cllr Cawley to find out who had issued the key). The Clerk confirmed that should the new tenant need support, he had the Clerks email and had been in contact regularly with the Clerk before taking the plot on. ii. Discussion on the Youth Shelter and who had cleaned it, still remains a mystery. **Action: Watching brief for now until the bramble growth has dropped away, when the rubbish can be removed.**

24/1220

Matters arising from 12th June 2024 meeting:

- a. **Community Play Area:** No update.
- b. **Youth Shelter Update:** Cllrs Bennett and James had reviewed historic paper work in a box of papers. There was no information/legal status regarding land ownership in the box, although there was mention of the land in historic documents. The Clerk explained that she was sure she and the Chair had previously read the legal documentation during previous decision making discussions, including legal status. Cllr Cawley concurred.

Action: Clerk to review sale of Greatfields paperwork to ascertain whether the documentation relating to Quarry Farm allotments has been filed away in another file.

- c. **Tender, Grass cutting Review: c/f**
- d. **Tree Maintenance Tender c/f**
- e. **Payroll Tender: c/f**
- f. **SUEZ Waste Contract Update:** Proposal going forward to Somerset Council executive on 15.07.24 to uplift the contract (TBC) £3M in 2024, a further 4M in 2025 and reportedly more in further years. **Action: Cllr Ashton to keep the PC updated.**
- g. **Planning Team Update:** Covered under item 24/1217. The issues relating to planning capacity were considered to be County wide, however particularly acute in South Somerset. **Action: The Clerk to ask for a written update from Cllr Patrick regarding outstanding planning action items.**

24/1221

Reports & Correspondence:

- a. **Somerset Council Devolution Update:** The Highways subcommittee of the LCN met 2 weeks prior to the PC meeting. The Highways team promised that the menu of services which was initially produced last year would be published before August. **Decisions on what services to use or not use will be discussed once the information has been received.**
- b. **Local Community Networks:** The local LCN AGM was not quorate, as not enough people turned up to the meeting. The question that Cllrs asked Cllr Ashton was “Why and how is it continuing if it is failing”. A discussion was held. The feeling was that the current LCN is totally dominated by Chard and Ilminster and that perhaps the local Parishes should work together to provide a grass roots response. Major concerns were also raised due to the amount of funding going towards the running of LCNs. **Action: Cllr Ashton and the Clerk to propose a meeting with local Clerks, including Hinton St George, Merriott, Lopen, Chiselborough, and Norton Sub Hamdon to discuss sharing of resources. Cllr Griffiths also volunteered to also become involved.**
- c. **Clerk Report by Exception 13th June – 10th July 2024:** Potholes are still being marked up however; there has been no further updates from Highways on other outstanding items. All other items from the Clerks report are mentioned in the Minutes. **Action: Clerk to chase for information on the works at Bow Bridge.**
- d. **Footpaths Update:** Cllr Cockrem reported the new footpaths officer has been appointed. A complaint had been lodged with the Clerk regarding access across footpaths in the Parish which Cllr Cockrem has followed up. Cllr Cockrem has been working with the new footpaths officer and local land owners to clear the paths and carry out appropriate maintenance. The faults have also been reported and logged on the Somerset footpaths portal. A pedestrian gate has also been requested, which Cllr Cockrem is following up.
- e. **Drains, Potholes and Hedges:** Hedges have not been cut. Local PCs have been asking for hedges to be cut, and it has been confirmed they will be cut in the next few weeks on an already predetermined list. Hedges will only be cut one metre up for the road for visibility purposes and the cutting of hedges still remains the landowner’s responsibility. It was noted that the lower part of Hollowell Hill presented the most significant risk in the area relating to visibility and concerns had been raised by residents. **Action: Cllr Griffiths agreed to investigate land ownership at the lower end of Hollowell Hill. The Clerk to contact Highways to find out when the hedges will be cut.**
- f. **Somerset Flood Newsletter:** Previously circulated. **All to note.**
- g. **Affordable Rural Housing Project:** Previously circulated. **All to note.**
- h. **Somerset Environment & Ecological News:** Cllr Ashton had attended the meeting, and reported that it was discussed that TTRO’s (Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders) may be able to be issued to Parish Councils in order to allow them to close a road during an 18 month period. This would allow Parish Councils to close roads which regularly flood, without waiting for highways permission.

Action: Cllr Ashton to keep the PC updated, however it was agreed the Clerk would check with the PCs insurance company whether Cllr Ashton is insured to put out Road signs. Grants may be available for road signs, high visibility jackets and a dedicated flood phone.

- i. **Update Parish Councillor Vacancy:** A discussion was held. **Action:** It was agreed that Members would individually make contact with local residents The Clerk to also put the advert on Facebook, if none of the people approached were interested.
 - j. **Riverbank Stones at the Recreation Ground:** After discussion it was resolved that these should be removed due to them presenting as a hazard. **Action:** Cllr Cawley agreed to place the stones back in to the river. A letter to the resident who had placed the stones on to the river bank would be sent to explain the circumstances of their removal.
 - k. **Riverbank Safety:** It was agreed that some safety signage should be placed by the river. **Action:** Clerk to provide quotes and design suggestions.
 - l. **A civil contingency meeting had taken place in Crewkerne to discuss the creation of a local crisis plan. Another meeting had been planned for September: To note.**
- 24/1222** **Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday 11th September Agenda**
- a. **Agenda items, including Members Reports:** To be forwarded to the Clerk before Friday 6th September July 2024.
 - b. **The Clerk requested that the December Parish Council meeting be held on the first Wednesday of December 2024, which is the 4th December 2024. Resolved. All in favour.**

Meeting closed 8.26pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 11th September 2024

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock