WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

West & Middle Chinnock Parish Council Parish Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 9th October 2024

Cllr Bennett	**Cllr Ashton**
Cllr Cawley	**Cllr Cockrem**
Cllr James	**Clerk: Kim Duller**

24/1235 **Public Forum: i)** A resident raised serious concerns regarding the state of one particular pot hole which had been previously reported and also the general state of the roads. He confirmed this hole has been the cause of a puncture. The Chair confirmed that the said pot hole had been reported and continued by explaining that Somerset Council's services relating to Highways were in disarray, due not only to the current financial situation, but also the number of redundancies taking place. **Action: Clerk to send resident link to the Highways insurance claim portal. Ward Cllrs Patrick and Hewitson to be asked for a formal response as neither of them were in attendance at the meeting. ii)** A drain outside of the school was reported as overflowing during heavy rain. A query was raised to consider if the stream further down had exacerbated the situation due to straw blocking the water. **Action: Clerk to speak to KD to ask if he and the Chair could check the drain opposite the school and identify where the blockage is located. iii) Allotments: A query was raised relating to the number of plots at Quarry Farm Allotments. Cllr James confirmed 20 main plots, with some being divided in to halves and quarters. One quarter plot isn't available due to being unsuitable for use. She confirmed all allotments are currently taken.**

24/1236 **Apologies for Absence:** None.

24/1237 **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. **iii)** Cllr Bennett, Playground Committee.

24/1238 **To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes from the Parish Council Meeting, 11th September 2024. <u>Resolved.</u> All in favour.**

24/1239 **Matters Arising Not on Agenda:** None

24/1240 **Somerset Council, Councillors Report:** A "general" circular report for the Coker Ward had been circulated. **Action: On behalf of the Parish Council, the Clerk was asked to i) How the underspend has been achieved and implications for following years. ii) Confirmation of which budgets have been cut and by how much (in particular reference to Highways), iii) The impact of redundancies in the key areas impacting on Parish Councils, including Highways and Planning. iv) To receive a brief on what the Spend Control Board remit/TOR is and how it makes its decisions and its objectives/outcomes. All Parish Council Members agreed this information needs to be made public in light of the continuing reduction of basic services, which impact the daily lives of residents. v) The consequences to the Parish Council and residents of the redundancies and an understanding of what will be put in place to counteract the loss of key officers. vi) Where is the money coming from for the latest round of redundancies as it is the Parish Council's understanding that these were not in the original budget.** In summary the Parish Council felt it was no further forward in terms of planning its budget and devolution of services than it was this time last year. It was felt that "everything has ground to a halt". Members expressed concern as to how Parish Councils could be able to realistically budget going forward to 25-26 without an honest and truthful appraisal of the finances of Somerset Council.

24/1241 **<u>Planning:</u>**

a. Applications:

i) **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock**: No further movement and no planning officers to ask at the moment. **Action: Clerk to follow up with Cllr Patrick who is on the Area South Planning Committee.**

ii) **Eastfield Lane, Section 73A determination Application Number: 24/02093/S73A:** All Members had studied the plans. The Clerk confirmed that the proposed store in the garage was to provide space for a heat source pump, which could not be accommodated in the house due to lack of loft space. Members had no further queries relating to the garage extension. **Action: Clerk to speak to the applicants regarding the proposed amendments on the house and report back to Members.**

b. **Determinations:**

i) **Higher Gatchell, Higher Street West Chinnock 24/01665/HOU:** It was noted that it was disappointing that there was no condition relating to a bat survey after bat activity had been noted in the application, however there was standing advice.

c. **Planning Enforcement:**

i) **Smith's Hill:** No further works have taken place. **Action: Clerk to contact Cllrs Patrick and Hewitson in the absence of any enforcement officer in post in South Somerset for an update. It was noted by one of the Members that a number of graduates have been recruited by Somerset Council to replace officers who have left. Clerk to ask for further information. It was also noted that at the most recent Area South Planning meeting there were a number of issues between participants during the meeting, which are being followed up.**

d. **Queries:** None

24/1242 **Finance:**

a. **NALC updated Financial Regulations:** The Clerk reported that Clerks nationally had questioned the legality of some of the information contained in the new Regulations, therefore this item will be put on hold. Current standing orders will therefore continue.

b. **Rent Request 24/25, Broadstone Farm, Greatfields £200.00:** Remittance received. Clerk to confirm payment in bank account.

c. **Payroll Company Update:** A new company has been found with a 50% saving. Due to a 3-month contract notice period, the new company will commence in December 2024. There will be a credit payment made to the Parish Council at the end of the contract for over charging by the current company. The Clerk confirmed she had received a formal apology.

d. **To pay any routine invoices:**

i) **Village Hall Invoice Notification of Increase in Charges:** The Clerk confirmed an increase in Village Hall cost from April 2025. **Action: The Clerk was asked to request further information relating to the rise in charges.**

ii) **Final Audit Invoice from External Auditors £210, plus VAT. Resolved, all in favour.** It was noted that the final audit certificate had been received and is published on the Community Website, with a copy of the final AGAR form for 2023/24. A copy of the amendment to the original audit has also been published. The audit statement was read out by the Clerk. The statement is contained in the External Auditors Certificate published on the West & Middle Chinnock Community Website.

iii) **SSL Invoice for September 2024, £307.38 plus VAT.** This is being queried by the Clerk and the Internal Auditor, NC. There was a query that the Youth shelter had not been cut at all during September. **Action: Clerk to follow up with SLL.**

iv) **SALC, Invoice for Code of Conduct Training Cllr James: £25.00. Resolved, all in favour.**

e. **Delegated Powers Payments and Previously Agreed Invoices:**

i) **Clerks Salary September 2024**

ii) **HMRC PAYE September 2024, £95.20**

iii) **SSL Invoice for August previously queried by NC and KD, this was rectified and paid. £142.69 incl. VAT.**

24/1243 **Allotments Report: Cllr James**

a. No further general updates in September.

b. **Registration of Chickens, statutory guidance from Defra commenced 1st October 2024:** 2 allotment holders impacted. One has sent off registrations papers. **Action: Clerk to give a printed copy of the form to Councillor Cawley to fill in as he was unable to access the digital one. Once receipts have been received, allotment holders to give a copy of the receipt to the Clerk, to keep on file.**

c. **Waiting List:** 2 residents are on the waiting list, one may withdraw, tbc.

24/1244 **Matters arising from 11th September 2024 Meeting:**

a. **River Safety Signage at the Recreation Ground:** The Clerk presented some cheaper versions of standard safety signs, as well as a bespoke sign from John Burton signs. Members opted for a standard A4 2mm plastic sign for £12.50, plus VAT. **Action: Clerk to order. No fixings required as the Chair offered to organise the fixings.**

b. **Hedge Cutting Hollowell Hill and throughout the Villages:** Previous item. It was confirmed that the hedges were eventually cut by Highways.

c. **Youth Shelter: Greatfields review of paper work:** The Clerk has reviewed the paperwork and found the original deeds to Quarry Farm site. However, both the Chair and Clerk believe there is some change of use information somewhere. **Action: Clerk to review files to see if it was part of historic minutes or a potential "missed" allotment archive file. Ongoing.**

d. **Tender, Grass Cutting Review:** To be put on hold as there is a review of procurement of local services by a proposed, yet to be formed, group of local clerks.

e. **Tree Maintenance Tender:** Advice as per Grass Cutting Review.

f. **Planning Team Update: Discussed under item 24/1241/ci**

24/1245 **Reports & Correspondence:**

a. **Devolution Update:**

i. **No update to report. Refer to request for information, item xxx**

ii. **Enhanced Highways Maintenance Project.** No reported progress or further information. Very few Parishes have their drains mapped out and currently there are no officers available to give this information to Parishes. The understanding by Clerks is that as devolution hasn't formally taken place yet and contractor commissioning is not complete, that the Highways team are still legally responsible for clearing drains and gullies etc. **Action: Clerk to request an update from Cllrs Patrick and Hewitson.**

iii. **LCNs:** Still issues regarding the Crewkerne LCN being able to achieve any outcomes. Two Annual meetings have not been quorate. **Action: Clerk to request an update from Cllrs Patrick and Hewitson.**

b. **Clerk Report, by exception 12th September to 9th October 2024:**

i. **Clerks Group for Parishes in the local vicinity:** Due to the lack of outcomes and progress from the LCNs and Somerset Council, a group of local clerks are getting together to consider the benefits of working together on key areas which impact rural parishes, including front line services, procurement, planning, highways, and sharing of information etc.

ii. **Tractors/Mobile Phones:** Following the September minutes, The Clerk had spoken to Broadstone Farm regarding the queries which had previously been raised. They have confirmed that they have cab cams in tractors and would be happy to liaise with residents. Also confirmed is that there will not be a separate road track built for tractors at the back of the farm leading to Broadstone land as this is not financially viable and tractors will continue to use the highway. Where

farmers use contractors, the Parish Council will need to take this up with farmers on an individual basis.

iii. **Neighbourhood Plan:** Clerks have been advised that involvement with the Local Plan is more important at the moment and should take precedence over developing a neighbourhood plan**.** This was in light of proposals for building of new housing stock on land in and around villages.

iv. **Double Yellow Lines around the School:** This issue has been passed back to the Parish Council by Cllr Patrick and an Officer at Somerset Council to consider whether double yellow lines are required. Somerset Council has refused to do an assessment unless full surveys are undertaken by the Parish Council which demonstrate not only need, but also how these would be enforced. The September discussion regarding residents posting their own signage on their gates to prevent parking in front of drives was recommended again as a reasonable course of action. The preferred route for the Parish Council would be some form of self-regulation with marshalls. **Action: The Clerk to arrange discussions with the police again for advice and also to arrange a meeting with the headmaster at the school and Chair of the PTA.**

v. **Speed and Flooding:** No volunteers have come forward following on from the September minutes: **Action: Clerk to advertise for volunteers.**

vi. **Police Contact:** Clerk still waiting for a response to emails.

vii. **Parish Councillor Vacancy:** No expression of interest.

c. **Footpaths: i)** Cllr Cockrem has met with the new footpaths officer, who used to be a planning officer, but is involved in training the new graduates. Cllr Cockrem had met with Richard Baker at Eastfield Farm and there will be a diversion through a previously reported impassable route, including a review of signage. **ii)** There are a number of new gates available for footpaths which Richard Baker has kindly offered to pick up from Chard and install. **iii)** Cllr Cockrem has cleared a path on Broadstone farm land which is now more easily accessible, close to Eastfield Lane**. iv)** A sleeper bridge which on inspection is classed to be dangerous will be replaced. **v)** The footpath officer from the Council will be meeting with the Baileys to discuss a potential diversion of the path on the Maize field in West Chinnock, in an attempt to resolve residents' concerns when the path is blocked each year during the growing period.

d. **Footpaths Book, West & Middle Chinnock:** A request was made by a resident regarding the updating of the West & Middle Chinnock Footpath and walks booklet. **Action: The Clerk to reach out to those involved in developing it previously and also asking for volunteers to walk and check the paths.**

e. **Second Hand Bike Donation:** A resident asked if the Parish Council had any information on the second-hand bike collection scheme that Somerset Council has previously promoted, as she had some bikes to donate. **Action: Clerk to investigate.**

24/1246 **Correspondence & Matters for the Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 13th November 2024. Agenda. Forward any items to the Clerk by Friday 8th November 2024.**

Meeting closed 8.35pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 13th November 2024

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock

Change of December 2024 Parish Council Meeting Date

The December Parish Council meeting will be held on the 4th December instead of the 11th December 2024