WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

West & Middle Chinnock Parish Council Parish Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 13th November 2024

Cllr Bennett **Cllr Ashton**
Cllr Cawley **Cllr Griffiths**
Clerk: Kim Duller

24/1247 **Public Forum:** No Comments from the Public Forum. The Clerk explained that she would be testing an AI tool to help write a summary for the discussions during the meeting. The Chair confirmed the meeting would still be taped**.**

24/1248 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Cockrem, work commitments. The Chair explained that Cllr James had resigned due to personal reasons.

24/1249 **Declarations of Interest: i)** Cllr Cawley, Allotments, **ii)** Cllr Ashton, 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.

24/1250 **To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes from the Parish Council Meeting, 9th October 2024. Resolved. All in favour.**

24/1251 **Matters Arising Not on Agenda:** None

24/1252 **Somerset Council, Councillors Report:** A "general" circular report for the Coker Ward had been sent to Members by the Clerk. Members expressed disappointment that there was nothing of relevance on the local issues impacting on West & Middle Chinnock, neither had any information been forthcoming on the previous questions asked in the October Minutes. Cllr Hewitson confirmed he does not read the Minutes of meetings from the Coker Ward as he attends the Parish Council meetings. Cllr Patrick had confirmed in writing to the Clerk that he had not seen the Minutes. However, the Clerk confirmed that she had kept the PC up to date with issues relating to the continuing financial difficulties at Somerset Council and the latest round of redundancies. The Clerk also confirmed that she had circulated a letter from the Leader of Somerset Council Bill Revans, which explained the challenges that Somerset Council was facing. In the letter he advised Parish Councils to increase their precept to cover the shortfall of any services which may be devolved. The Clerk summed up and explained there was major uncertainty in all areas of Somerset Council and advised the Parish Council that the budgeting process should be a pragmatic process led both by the demands of its residents to improve services against, however weighed up against the decision as to whether to increase the precept 25/26. Cllr Hewitson gave details of grants for wellbeing in the community and flood resilience. Also discussed was Boundary Commission maps, which are out for consultation. **Action: Cllr Hewitson to forward details of the grants to the Clerk. The Clerk also asked for the new boundary commission map, as she was unable to open it.**

24/153 **Planning:**

a. Applications:

- **i)** **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock**: No further movement and no planning officers to ask at the moment. **C/F from October Minutes. Action: Clerk to follow up with Cllr Patrick who is on the Area South Planning Committee.**
- **ii)** **Eastfield Lane**, **Section 73A Application Number: 24/02093/S73A:** Awaiting determination.
- **iii)** **24/02494/TCA: Work to trees in conservation area. 47 Higher Street, TA18 7QA.** For information, to be determined through delegated powers.
- **iv)** **24/02575/TCA: Work to trees in conservation area. Barton House, Lower Street TA18 7PT.** For information, to be determined though delegated powers.

The Clerk explained that even when delegated powers are in place, the Parish Council still has the power to question a recommendation if it has evidence to support a query.

b. **Planning Enforcement:**
   i) **Smith's Hill:** No further works have taken place. **Action: C/F: Clerk to contact Cllrs Patrick and Hewitson in the absence of any enforcement officer in post in South Somerset, for an update.**

c. **Planning Queries:** None

24/1254 **Finance:**

a. **To Agree Qtr 2 Accounts:** Recommended by the Internal Auditor Neil Cochran**. Resolved.** All in favour.
b. **SLL35082 query, £368.86**: Clerk checked invoice dates with SLL and discussed with Neil Cochran. Agreed dates were correct. **Resolved.** All in favour.
c. **NALC updated Financial Regulations: C/F**
d. **Confirmation of Receipt of Payment:** Greatfields Rent, £200.00, received October 2024.
e. **Village Hall Charge Query:** The Clerk read a full response from the village hall committee giving a thorough background to the rent rise, including the current hourly structure being cheaper in West & Middle Chinnock, than anywhere else locally. Members were satisfied that the rise was a fair. **No further action**. The new increase will take place from January 2025.
f. **National Allotment Society Membership £66.00 Inc VAT. Resolved.** All in favour.
g. **To Pay Clerks Expenses Qtr 2 £100.95: Resolved.** All in favour.
h. **To Pay Clerk for PVC Safety Signs, for River bank sign £16.18 Inc VAT: Resolved.** All in favour.
i. **To Agree Back Pay for Clerk to April 2024 following the Public Sector National Agreement:** New hourly rate is £14.36. Previously it was £13.73. **Resolved.** All in favour. It was noted that in a recent advert for a Clerks in a smaller Parish than West & Middle Chinnock the recommended pay scale is £15.58. The Clerk said she did want the recommended one scale move each year which was recommended for Clerks, but may need to consider it in future years.
j. **To pay any routine invoices:**
   i) **To Pay Somerset Landscapes SLL35177, October 24 £285.38:** Dates were back to front, but tallied with the number of cuts**. Resolved.** All in favour.
k. **Delegated Powers Payments and Previously Agreed Invoices:**
   i) **Clerk Salary October 2024**
   ii) **HMRC PAYE October 2024, £95.20**

24/1255 **Allotments Report: Clerk**

a. **Registration of Chickens, statutory guidance from DEFRA, commenced 1st October 2024: Action: Clerk to speak to DEFRA about how she can get hold of receipts for Allotment holders who have only sent hard copies and do not have any details of registration.**
b. **Waiting List:** Possibly 2 or 3. **Action: Clerk to organise a handover with Cllr James.**

24/1256 **Matters arising from 9th October 2024 Meeting:**

a. **River Safety Signage at the Recreation Ground: Actioned.**
b. **Youth Shelter: Greatfields review of paper work: C/F**
c. **Tender, Grass Cutting Review:** To be put on hold as there is a review of procurement of local services. **C/F**
d. **Tree Maintenance Tender:** Advice as per Grass Cutting Review, part of devolution of services. **C/F**
e. **Police Contact and Inconsiderate Parking Around the School.** The Clerk has spoken to our local PCSO. **Action: Both have agreed that the way forward is to involve the school and encourage a community based response. Clerk to formally write to the Head Teacher to arrange a meeting.**

f. **Second Hand Bike Donation:** Now have 12 bikes maybe more. **Action: Clerk is liaising with the Bike Charity and the Chair has agreed to bring all of the bikes to one central point, in order for them to be picked up.**
g. **West & Middle Chinnock Local Walks:** Currently in progress, we now need volunteers to come forward to "walk the walks, to check accessibility. **Action: Clerk to re-advertise.**

24/1257 **Reports & Correspondence:**

a. **Somerset Council Financial situation, Impact of Further Redundancies on Decision Making for Parish Councils.** Previously discussed under item 24/1252. All Members have received a letter from Bill Revans and the Unions are now involved in the current round of redundancies.
b. **Local Plan:** More information has been received regarding the consultation. The deadline for the response to the consultation has been extended to 30th November 2024. **Action: The Clerk will be sending Members a suggested response by 23rd November 2024.**
c. **Parish Council Budget: 24/25:** The Clerk presented the draft budget and the detail of this was discussed. It was agreed that the budget was sensible in light of the current situation of the uncertainty. The Clerk recommended that this budget be the baseline for moving forward, using the PCs reserves policy as the basis for decision making, in relation to ear-marking reserves. One item which needs to be considered is an increase in insurance due to the additional services being passed to the Parish Councils as part of devolution. **Action: Clerk to make any further budget recommendations at the December and January meetings as any final decisions do not have to happen until the end of January 2025.**
d. **Devolution: No further update.**
e. **Local Community Networks:** Crewkerne and Chard LCN was not quorate at AGM. Waiting for advice on next steps as to whether the LCN can continue to function.
f. **Clerk Report, by Exception, 10th October to 13th November 2024:**
    i. **Local Clerks Group:** 11 Clerks have joined together to work in partnership and collaboratively; completely output focussed. Leads have been created for key areas and the aim is to information share in order to reduce the amount of bureaucracy and paperwork. Other areas include purchasing power, sharing of policies, common pricing, budgeting, research and planning, including permitted development. Economies of scale and time. Feedback has been very positive.
    ii. **Ditches and flooding Middle Chinnock: Action: Clerk to confirm with Highways who is responsible for keeping ditches clear.**
    iii. **Highways:** The Highways areas are going to be reduced to two: Area North and Area South. It has also been reported that 4 senior positions will be cut.
    iv. **Tractors and Mud complaint, Middle Chinnock:** Waiting for feedback from Cllr Cockrem.
    v. **Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting:** Ongoing.
    vi. **SALT:** Clerk to follow up to ask when salt is going to be delivered and bins topped up.
g. **Highways, Drains, Potholes and Hedges: By exception.** The Clerk has been advised that Kiers sub-contractors are running behind. **Action: Clerk to ask for input from Cllrs Patrick and Hewitson.**
h. **Footpaths:** Permission has been given by the landowner of the land at East Lane to undertake maintenance gates at the entrance from the East Lane to the footpath, including a new gate. It has been confirmed that the number of Footpath Officers has been decreased.

24/1258 **Correspondence & Matters for the Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 4th December 2024 Agenda. Please forward any items to the Clerk by Friday 29th November 2024.**

Meeting closed 8.25pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 4th December 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

Members of the Parish Council would like to invite local residents to join them, after the close of the 4th December meeting
for
Christmas Drinks & Nibbles

Provided by Parish Councillors and the Clerk