

WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

West & Middle Chinnock Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 11th June 2025

Cllr Bennett - Chair

Cllr Cockrem – Deputy Chair

Clerk: Kim Duller

1 Member of the General Public

Cllr Ashton

Cllr Griffiths

25/1332

Public Forum: The internal auditor Neil Cochran queried the proposed item on the agenda regarding the highways consultant, reference Fortunes Well Planning. Payment for LvW Highways of £500.00 plus VAT. The Clerk confirmed that the decision to employ the consultant was as a result of a recommendation of concerns raised by CPRE and the Parish Council during May. The Clerk confirmed there had been an online discussion with Parish Council Members which was traceable. Initially the price quote was £1,500.00; however the Clerk had negotiated a £500.00 plus VAT contract based on a reduced final project, and the Clerk providing the detail for the application at submission. **Action: Clerk to send NC a copy of the traceable discussion and vote.**

25/1333

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Cawley, work commitments.

25/1334

Declarations of Interest: i) Cllr Ashton, Hinton St George, Parish Council, Merriott Parish Council and Somerset Council. Member, National Farmers Union and National Association for Shooting and Conservation. Cllr Ashton confirmed he was also on the Somerset Rivers authority. **Action: Cllr Ashton to send the Clerk any other interests in regards to committee membership.** ii) Cllr Bennett, Playground Committee.

25/1335

To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes from the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council 14th May 2025 Resolved. All in Favour.

25/1336

Matters Arising Not on Agenda: None

25/1337

Somerset Council, Councillors Report: No Ward Councillor in attendance. **Action: Clerk to follow up with Cllr Hewitson regarding outstanding actions.**

25/1338

Planning:

a. Applications:

- i) **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock:** The Chair thanked the PC for the vast amount of input on the planning application. He confirmed that there had been on-going correspondence between Cllr Patrick and the Planning Officer at SC, which the PC felt should be published and made available for residents. Concerns were raised about the potential for comments leading to pre-determination. Cllr Patrick had been active on social media answering queries raised by some residents, however not all of the queries raised by CPRE. The original archaeological report was commissioned by the client and therefore could be susceptible to bias. A discussion took place culminating in the PC advocating that the application should go to committee when there had been so many concerns had been raised and new evidence. **Action: Clerk to publish correspondence and write to Ian Cousins the Planning Officer to confirm the concerns raised by the Council. Clerk to also liaise with Cllr Mike Hewitson.**
- ii) **4, Manor Farm Cottages, Middle Chinnock, 25/00725/LBC: Listed Building Consent:** All PC members had reviewed the plans. No comment and no objections. **Action: Clerk to submit no objections with the planners**
- iii) **Dairy House, Middle Chinnock, 25/1233/LBC: Listed Building Consent:** All PC members had reviewed the plans. No comment and no objections. **Action: Clerk to submit no objections with the planners.**

b. Determinations: None

c. **Planning Enforcement:**

- i) **Smith's Hill Development:** It was discussed that there had been no further feedback from the Tree Officer and Enforcement Officer regarding the illegal felling of trees and an exposed broken drain on the site. The PC still maintains its requested legal action be taken against the owner regarding the illegal felling of the trees. Progress on the new planting scheme has not been received yet. The Clerk outlined an offer for a local Councillor in another part of the Council who had offered to follow up enforcements. **Action: Clerk to contact him for an initial chat.**

25/1339

Finance:

- a. **Publication of Annual Accounts for Inspection:** For information, placed in Bus shelter and on community Website. Published on 10th June 2025, available for 30 days.
- b. **To Pay LvW Highways Consultant £500.00 +VAT (Ref: Fortunes Well):** Previously agreed by Members. **Resolved, all in favour.**
- c. **HMRC Query:** The Clerk confirmed both she and the payroll company had spoken to HMRC and HMRC had confirmed there were no issues. **Clerk advised that written evidence is required before the item is closed.**
- d. **To pay SSL invoice 35699 £247.32+ VAT (C/F from May meeting).** After discussion, it was agreed that due to concerns regarding the amount of apparent anomalies, the Clerk would meet with SLL to review the invoices and level of service. **Action: Clerk**
- e. **Membership of SALC: £276.38.** The Clerk gave an overview of the value of Membership. **Agreed for a further year.**
- f. **Invoice Rec Pavilion, Rates:** The Clerk explained she had received a suspicious email regarding a request for payment for rates at the Pavilion. The Clerk had passed it to Neil Cochran who had then passed to a Pavilion Committee Member. Considering the evidence to hand, it was agreed this was a fake invoice. **No further action.**
- g. **To Pay Any Routine Invoices: None**
- h. **Delegated Powers Payments**
- i) **The Clerk had requested a shredder for the PC be purchased and this had been agreed by the Chairman under delegated powers during May 2025. This was due to the high volume of GDPR related paper documents currently stored and the need to put this onto a digital format. £53.99.** A discussion took place led by Cllr Cockrem suggesting the move towards a paper free Parish Council, together with the increasing cost of ink. It was agreed that burning paper was not an environmentally sustainable alternative. **Action: i) The Clerk to stop printing Agendas and Minutes at the Parish Council meetings. Cllr Cawley to be sent documents via email. Clerk to purchase a second screen to work on so that when reviewing documents for consultations, finance, planning applications, there isn't the need to print them off. ii) The Clerk to research, review and circulate updated GDPR guidance to Parish Councillors as well as guidance on training.**
- ii) **HMRC £112.13, paid May 2025**
- iii) **Clerks Salary £425.38 May 2025**

25/1340

Allotments:

- a. **Inspection:** The Clerk will undertake the Inspection in August if a new Councillor has not been recruited. Concerns and complaints have been received regarding some plots which are in a particularly poor state. **Action: Clerk to announce a provisional date for Inspections, reissue previous inspection summaries and contact those plot holders where plots appear not to be being cultivated, to discuss a solution.**
- b. **Plot Vacancies: 1 x Qtr. plot.**

25/1341

Matters arising from 14th May 2025 meeting:

- a. **Identification of Broken & Blocked drains:** The Chair thanked Keith and Gill Dodge for the fantastic job they have done. He stressed the need to be proactive and report all of the blocked drains now, so that drains are cleared before autumn. **Action Clerk.**

- b. **Dog Fouling Update:** Cllr Hewitson was not in attendance, therefore could not provide the requested update. The Clerk explained that a list of all Council contacts had been promised to be provided to all Somerset Clerks 18 months ago at the point of devolution. There is significant frustration and anger that this has not emerged. Cllr Cockrem confirmed that her original contact is still supposedly in post however has not answered any emails Cllr Cockrem has sent. Cllr Cockrem explained she had been advised by the Footpaths Officer that the officer responsible for dog fouling was still in post, but on reflection felt that it might just be a “name on the list”. **Action: Carried forward from May 25 meeting. Clerk to ask Cllr Hewitson to find out if there is a dog fouling team in place – or a department in the Council who is available to provide support.**
- c. **Reporting of Maintenance Incidents:** Whilst both the Clerk and Cllr Patrick are still actively asking residents to report any highways concerns, the majority are still being reported by the Clerk. The Clerk apologised for the confusion of the sudden road closure on Scott’s Way, whilst a major pot hole was filled at Bow Bridge. She had asked for the action to fill the pothole/trench immediately as it had become dangerous. The Council responded within a week. Cllr Ashton confirmed he had written to the Council to ask for the road in the Bow Bridge vicinity which is subject to flooding, to be raised. **Action: Clerk to keep encouraging residents to report via the portal and Cllr Ashton provide an update on his discussions with the Council at the next meeting.**

25/1342

Reports & Correspondence:

- a. **New Division Boundaries Consultation Somerset: Ends 11.08.25:** A discussion was held and although not all Councillors had read the consultation, the general consensus was that the PC would prefer the suggested Ward which included “like minded” rural communities, rather than be part of a main conurbation. **No further action required.**
- b. **Devolution Update: No Update.**
- c. **Local Community Networks:** Still a query whether these will continue under their current format. Waiting for results of review.
- d. **Statutory Update .GOV Domain for Parish Councils:** The Clerk explained that national government is advocating that Parish Councils have a.GOV domain, and confirmed this was being discussed amongst Clerks and Parish Councils in Somerset. The Clerk had carried out research and agreed with Cllr Ashton that it is not yet mandatory however it was something that PC would have to consider if the external auditors insisted on this as part of the audit regime and also any other government agencies to which the PC is responsible. **Action: Clerk to monitor the situation and keep the PC updated. In the meantime circulate the guidance to the Chair and Cllr Ashton.**
- e. **Youth Football at the Recreation Ground:** For information, a new West & Middle Chinnock Youth Football team will be using the Recreation Ground as their base in 2025/26. *As an aside the Chair mentioned that the Barnaby Webber Foundation is supporting Youth Cricket.* **Action: Clerk to let Rose, W&MC youth CC know.**
- f. **Play Equipment Inspection Sovereign:** The Clerk confirmed the inspection had been booked. No report has been received. **Action: Clerk to chase report from Sovereign.**
- g. **Clerk Report, by exception 10th May 2025 – 11th June 2025. Nothing to report which hasn’t already been included in the Minutes.**
- h. **Footpaths:** The Chair explained Cllr Ashton has a small tractor and questioned whether this could be used on the Footpaths. **Action: Cllr Cockrem and Cllr Ashton to liaise.** Cllr Cockrem had received concerns from a resident regarding some action which she thought had previously been implemented, and will follow up. Rec Gate, Lower Street entrance, concern had been raised in relation to the gate being in state of dis-repair, also concerns as to whether the signpost at this position should have clearer directional signage on. Cllr Cockrem confirmed the gate was already on the Councils “new gate” required list since October 2024 and that she had followed up on numerous occasions.

The actioned report is currently showing as “in progress” on the portal. The Clerk advised that she had been sent a link relating to PC’s and volunteers being able to “adopt” footpaths, which went against what the PC had been advised. Anyone who does adopt a path would have to be trained. **Action: Cllr Cockrem to review the guidance to see if it would be something the Parish Council would like to consider. (Clerk to resend a link).**

- i. **Road Closure, West Coker 25.06. 2025:** For information, the diversion will send traffic through West Chinnock.
- j. **Scott’s Way Riverbank Maintenance:** The Clerk confirmed she had spoken to the subcontractors of Somerset Councils main contractor Keir, at the site. They were able to confirm that the work to secure the river bank would take place, but that there is no fixed date yet. **Action: Clerk to continue to liaise with the Highways team for information.**
- k. **Police Report: May 2025:** The Clerk had received a report from the police which outlined recent incidents in the villages. Whilst the police had reported the crime rates were low, the Parish Council is concerned at the number of incidents and urged residents to be vigilant. **Action: Clerk to publicise and recommend residents be vigilant.**
- l. **Drain, Potholes and hedges by exception:** Previously discussed during the meeting.
- m. **Parish Councillor Recruitment:** On-going in the background. **All Members agreed to consider how to attract new Councillors.**
- n. **Somerset Festival of Remembrance 2025, 1st November 1st 2025:** For information.
- o. **Broken Swing at the Recreation Ground:** Cllr Cawley and the Chair have taken responsibility to mend. The Clerk obtained a quote for £159.00 plus VAT quote for 2 new swings as back up. All Councillors agreed the quote. **Resolved.**
- p. **School PFA Sports Social 4th July 2025:** For Information. The PC asked whether this was a private or public event, and issues relating to the pony rides. to ensure the correct insurance is in place. **Action: Clerk to follow up with Rose.**

24/1343

Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday 9th July 2025 Agenda.

- a. **Agenda items, including Members Reports:** To be forwarded to the Clerk before Friday 4th July 2025. Cllr Cockrem confirmed she would not be attending the July meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 9th July 2025

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock