

WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

West & Middle Chinnock Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 9th July 2025

Cllr Bennett - Chair
Cllr Cawley
4 Members of the General Public

Cllr Ashton
Clerk: Kim Duller

25/1342 **Public Forum:** Keith Dodge asked if there was any news on the open drain at the Smiths Hill development which is discharging straight onto the highway. The Clerk confirmed that the enforcement Officer had not come back on this matter. **Action Clerk to chase and cc Cllr Hewitson.**

25/1343 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllrs Cockrem and Griffiths.

25/1344 **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 a member of the Somerset Rivers authority. ii) Cllr Bennett, Playground Committee. iii) Cllr Cawley, Allotments.

25/1345 **To Approve and Sign as Correct, the Minutes from the Parish Council meeting 11th June 2025. Resolved. All in Favour.**

25/1346 **Matters Arising Not on Agenda:** i) Rose Goddard will be attending late to provide an update on W&MC Youth Cricket. ii) Salt Bin Incident, Poop Hill. iii) Cllr Patrick has sent an email to the Highways team requesting confirmation of hedge cutting schedules, covering main and village roads.

25/1347 **Somerset Council, Councillors Report:** Cllr Hewitson in attendance. i) **Traffic lights on A356:** Due to sink hole from collapsed drain. The drain has now been jetted and it will be filled with concrete and the road resurfaced. It is high priority, but there are no official timescales yet. ii) **Cllr Hewitson' confirmed his objection for the Fortunes Well Development:** Based on planning policy, which followed CPRE's previous report, as well as concerns relating to the entrance to the site. Cllr Hewitson confirmed that there had been significant representation, however the planning officer has not yet made his decision as to whether to recommend to approve or whether it will be called in to committee due to the number of objections and representations. iii) **Dog Fouling:** It was confirmed that the team who used to manage dog fouling has been disbanded. Mike has a contact and we are awaiting further clarification of who will be able to address the Parish Council and residents concerns. **Action: Cllr Hewitson/Clerk.** iv) **Bow Bridge Maintenance:** Funding is ring fenced, but no exact date for commencement of works. Cllr Ashton confirmed he has suggested raising the Road by 50cm with Somerset Rivers Authority in order to reduce flood impact and improve access. The Clerk confirmed that she had also spoken with the Environment Agency at the Flooding event hosted by Somerset Council regarding an assessment of the Bow Bridge stretch of water and road. Also discussed was impact of the flow of the river caused by the trees. The Clerk confirmed that SRA had also agreed to survey the Poop Hill area, where it floods. **Action: Cllrs Ashton and Hewitson to keep the PC updated as to when the SRA and EA will be visiting.** v) **Lack of Single Named Contacts for Key Services:** Cllr Hewitson confirmed the list is not going to be available until the autumn due to the number of changes at the Somerset Council.

25/1348 **Planning:**

a. Applications:

- i) **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock:** Discussions included: i) Concerns regarding the role of the planning officer role vis a vis objections to planning applications and guidelines relating to NPPF and local

plans. (In reference to an article by Cllr Patrick). ii) It was noted that further objections have been submitted around the 1:10 gradient and accessibility. iii) The Planning Committee referral process was discussed. iv) Objections thus far from the PC, Cllr Hewitson, residents, CPRE. The discussion ended with the Chair explaining that the PC would now have to wait for confirmation to see if the application is referred to the planning committee. v) **Freedom of Information Request:** The Clerk confirmed an FOI request had been received via a website called "What Do They Know," questioning spending on consultants. Although the request was valid, concerns were raised about the anonymous and unofficial nature of the platform. The Clerk has responded.

- ii) **25/01516/TCA Pondanella, Lower Street West Chinnock Crewkerne Somerset TA18 7PT:** Notification of intent to carry out Tree Surgery works to No. 1 Tree within a Conservation Area, T1 - Fraxinus Excelsior. **For Information**
- iii) **25/01515/TCA Beridene Lower Street West Chinnock Crewkerne Somerset TA18 7PT:** Notification of intent to Fell No. 1 Tree within a Conservation Area, T1 – Cypress. **For Information.**

b. **Determinations:** None

c. **Planning Enforcement:**

- i) **Smith's Hill Development:** Action: Clerk to contact enforcement and tree officers for update. If no response, follow up with the offer of enforcement support as discussed at the June meeting. cc. Cllr Hewitson.

25/1349

Finance:

- a. To pay SSL invoice 35699 £247.32+ VAT (C/F from May meeting). After meeting with SSL, revised Invoice £196.00 plus VAT. **Resolved**, all in favour.
- b. To Pay SLL invoice 35805 £247.32 plus VAT. **Resolved**, all in favour.
- c. **Invoice 1383, Training SALC: Councillor Essentials Training October 2024, £28.00.** The Clerk explained there had been x2 queried invoices. After investigation one was cancelled. The second one could be linked back to a training course for Cllr James, who subsequently left, however the booking had been made direct with SALC. **Resolved**, all in favour.
- d. **Recreation Ground Grass Cutting Changes:** Cutting will now occur on 3 separate schedules due to using different machines, a **large mower** for central areas, a **smaller mower** for detailed edging and strimming done separately. (The original skilled strimmer operator has been bought back specifically for this contract). It was noted there have been no further issues reported with the current quality of work, since the Clerks meeting with SSL. The Chair confirmed that the contract at the Rec was between the PC and SSL for an agreed number of cuts a year and was unable to go above the budgeted figure.
- e. **To Pay Any Routine Invoices:**
 - i) **Payroll April to June fee: £37.35. Resolved**, all in favour.
- f. **Delegated Powers Payments**
 - i) **HMRC £112.13, paid June 2025**
 - ii) **Clerks Salary £425.38 June 2025**
 - iii) **£14.92 previously agreed for Keith Dodge to purchase Tarmac to fill pothole/drain at Bow Bridge.**

25/1350

Allotments:

- a. **Cultivation of Plots:** Plot holders of 3 plots have been contacted and timelines agreed in reference to cultivation.
- b. **Allotment Inspection:** Planned for either 12th or 13th August, weather permitting. Final dates TBA once weather forecast is known. The inspection will take place with Lynda Clarke, South West Regional Advisor. The existing inspection methodology will be used with all plot holders receiving a copy of last years inspection. Lynda will review the

current process for inspection against national guidelines and make any recommendations for change, based on simplification of the process and increasing effectiveness and support for plot holders and the Parish Council.

- c. **Plot Vacancies: 1 x Qtr. Plot:** It was discussed that this plot was currently covered with weeds. **Action: Cllr Cawley to measure plot size and report to the Clerk. Clerk to purchase weed suppressant. Cllr Cawley to strim and cover the plot with the weed suppressant.**

25/1351

Matters arising from 11th June 2025 meeting:

- a. **Dog Fouling update:** Previously discussed under item 25/1347 iii). **Action: Cllr Mike Hewitson to follow up with the new team lead he has identified.**
- b. **Reporting of Maintenance Incidents:** There has been an excellent village's resident response to a number of issues including i) immediate reporting of a Salt Bin which had been hit by a large vehicle and was classed as an immediate risk as it was in the middle of the road. ii) Alarm sounding at the village Pavilion, iii) ASB in the villages. iv) Report of damage to a wall near Mechams Corner at a similar time to the salt bin being damaged. Concerns were raised regarding a large vehicle in the vicinity at the time, and similar skid marks around the site of the incidents. **Action: Clerk to order a new salt bin, exactly the same as the one previously purchased on Smiths Hill.**
- c. **Broken Swing at the Rec:** A new swing has been erected and the old one taken away. The Clerk ordered two new swings, which have arrived. **Action: Cllr Cawley to arrange for collection from the Clerk and to store safely.**

25/1352

Reports & Correspondence:

- a. **Enhanced Highways Maintenance Pilot Update:** A proposal had been received by all Parish Councils in Somerset. Parish Councils are questioning how they would decide which enhancements they would require, without a basic service level agreement being in place. It is felt there is a lack of clarity. **Action Cllr Hewitson to follow up with the Highways team.**
- b. **Volunteer Highways Maintenance Scheme:** Proposals had been received from Somerset Council regarding Volunteer schemes for road maintenance. This was welcomed, including the news that PCs would not have to pay a license fee to undertake the works, however there would be training involved. It was agreed that no decisions as to whether volunteers would be trained until there had been further information relating to the basic Service Level Agreement from Highways. **Action: Cllr Hewitson to action as part of 25/1352 a, above relating to SLA's.**
- c. **Grass cutting at the Rec:** Previously discussed under item 25/1349 d.
- d. **Additional Item: Cricket Nets at the Recreation Ground Outline Proposals:** Rose Goddard gave a "Cricket at the Rec" update. **i) Key points:** the under10 and under12s teams are growing, with a newly formed women's cricket section. Currently only one net is available, which is moveable but tends to be kept in place. The net is on a concrete base with worn Asto Turf. The club is looking to add a second moveable net to accommodate growth. The estimated cost is £2,500 for a moveable long net, with the potential to have the two moveable nets end to end, allowing two teams to train. The club is pursuing grant funding including with SCCC, other small funding pots and the Barnaby Webber Foundation. The club can fundraise to cover most of the cost, but will need support with the groundwork and logistics, including concerns about grass cutting and maintenance of the nets. A discussion was held including who was responsible for maintaining the nets and ground care. **ii) Summing Up:** The Chair summed up explaining that as the Rec was a shared area, fixed nets were not an option, but that the PC would be supportive of moveable nets. He also confirmed there were wider plans to develop the Rec into a wider community facility. He finished by explaining that the PC has limited funds due to the precept being raised through resident's council tax.

iii) **Next Steps:** It was agreed to work towards a “flexible” solution which allows wider community use of the Rec; potential removal of the existing hard wicket to free up space; visit other clubs for inspiration and solutions (involving the PC), clarify logistics regarding moving around nets and net placement, maintain communication with funding bodies and the Parish Council. **The Chair ended by thanking Rose for her presentation.**

- e. **Going Digital:** The Clerk fed back on advice from SALC and LGA regarding going paperless. After a discussion it was agreed that there has definitely been an improvement in going paperless, however that guidance around accessibility needed to be adhered to. Residents who attended the meeting had requested hard copy agendas and minutes be reinstated. **Action: Clerk to reinstate a reduced number.**
 - f. **Somerset Transport Plan:** The Clerk reported this was under review and had previously circulated. **Action: Councillors agreed that they did not want to respond.**
 - g. **Local Community Networks:** Cllr Ashton gave an overview of the current situation with LCN's and reported there had been suggestions for them to close, although this is uncertain. A new proposal is being discussed around restructuring the LCN's for smaller Parishes and larger area networks, acknowledging issues which extend beyond boundaries. **Action: Cllr Ashton to keep the PC updated.**
 - h. **Playground Equipment Inspection Sovereign:** Overall the inspection was very positive. **Action: The baby swings need monitoring as the wood is deteriorating. The inspector had tightened the bolts on the Seesaw and recommended regular checks to ensure they are kept tight.**
 - i. **Flood Preparedness & Resilience:** Both the Clerk and Cllr Ashton had attended an event hosted by a Partnership of SRA, Environment agency and various other agencies. The Clerk reported that there was an initiative which supported residents where they live in flood Zones, underwritten by the main insurance companies, also that the Rotary Club offer home flood risk assessments and mitigation tools are at reduced costs. **Action: The Clerk is hoping to organise a visit from the Rotary Club in September 2025.**
 - j. **Clerk Report, by exception 11th June 2025 – 9th July 2025.** Nothing to report which hasn't already been included in the Minutes.
 - k. **Footpaths:** The Clerk had received thanks on behalf of a resident regarding the new gate at the rec, which she explained had improved access. Other Members of the Parish Council had received negative reviews. **Action: Due to confusion with the feedback, the Clerk to liaise with Councillor Cockrem, who was not at the meeting to agree next steps. Carry forward item on adoption of footpaths by residents.**
 - l. **Scott's Way Riverbank Maintenance:** Previously reported by Cllr Hewitson.
 - m. **Parish Councillor Recruitment: No further Progress**
 - n. **Antisocial Behaviour:** Broken Fence at Rec in the car park, obvious that the damage was intentional. **Decision** not to close the Rec gate. Broken fence has been mended by Cllr Cawley. Further incidents have been reported at the Haunts with a large police presence. Also reports of an abandoned smashed car at a local farm. Police car usage of village for cut through in responding to incidents was noted. In summary community feedback indicates frustration over the lack of clarity and communication from the police. **Action: Clerk to continue to liaise with the link PCSO.**
 - o. **Drains, Potholes and Hedges by exception:** Nothing to report.
- Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday September 10th 2025 Agenda.**
- a. **Agenda items, including Members Reports:** To be forwarded to the Clerk before Friday 4th September 2025.

24/1353

Meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 10th September 2025

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock

No Parish Council Meeting in August 2025