WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

West & Middle Chinnock Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 10th September 2025

Cllr Bennett - Chair
Cllr Cawley
Clerk: Kim Duller
7 Members of the General Public
Cllr Ashton
Cllr Griffiths

25/1354 **Public Forum**: Recreation Ground: **i)** Dog Waste Bin in Recreation Ground: reported as broken. **Action: Cllr Cawley to check if he can mend it. Let Clerk know if new parts are needed. ii)** Wooden Footbridge (entrance by the Pavilion): Wood on bridge starting to rot as well as significant hedge growth restricting access. **Action: Clerk to speak to Cllr Cockrem and ask to be reported to Footpaths Officer. (Noted in the discussion, the Footpaths Officer has recently visited the site). iii)** Access across the footpath from Lower Street to the Recreation Ground during the winter months, including difficulty with levels of flooding, and mud at both ends: Discussion included raised stepping stones, raising the ground level, adding scalpings, or wood chippings, or most effective reinstating the ditches around the field which were previously in place. **Action: Further discussion with Landowner and the Chair.**

25/1355 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Cockrem previously notified.

25/1356 **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 and Somerset Rivers Authority. **ii)** Cllr Bennett, Playground Committee. **iii)** Cllr Cawley, Allotments.

25/1357 **To Approve and Sign as Correct, the Minutes from the Parish Council meeting 9th July 2025. Resolved. All in Favour.**

25/1358 **Matters Arising Not on Agenda:** Consultation on Sunday Parking Charges in South Somerset: **Action, Clerk to circulate and post on PC digital media**. (It was noted that charges are already in place in other areas in Somerset).

25/1359 **Somerset Council, Councillors Report:** Cllr Hewitson in attendance**. i)** Planning Officers "freeze on contact": The PC asked for further information as to when they would be able to contact the planning team. Cllr Hewitson advised there was still no direct contact and that any queries should be sent to him and he would submit them through a generic email address he has been given. Concerns were raised by the PC that the "easy cases" were being prioritised to ensure planning targets were being met and that difficult planning cases were being ignored. The Fortunes Well and Smiths Hill sites were quoted as an example. **ii)** Highways: Residents had reported concern about multiple closures at the same time, including access to main routes in to Yeovil, access to Crewkerne, Yeovil, Haselbury Plucknett and Misterton. Cllr Hewitson explained that the roadworks were not restricted to Highways maintenance and included overlapping works by different utility companies, including electric and water. Cllr Hewitson agreed that the situation had also been exacerbated by poor signage and those works which were "emergency" works, introduced without notice. He confirmed that the roadwork's on the A30 will be delayed due to poor weather. **iii)** Grants: Somerset Waste Partnership has announced grants are available between 5K and 10K for waste reduction projects. **iv)** Dog Fouling Enforcement Contact: Outstanding action from previous meeting. Cllr Hewitson confirmed that he had not been able to find out which team is now responsible for this in the Council. **Action: C/F to next meeting.**

25/1360 **Planning:**

a. **Applications:**
   i) **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock**: No decision yet, Further objections have been lodged.
b. **Determinations: None**
c. **Planning Enforcement:**
   i) **Smith's Hill Development:** There has been no further contact with the Tree or Enforcement Officers due to the planning guidance which restricts contact with Officers. **Action: Clerk to contact Highways to follow up with the drainage concern raised by Mr Dodge and the PC.**

25/1361 **Finance:**

a. **To Approve Qtr 1 25/26 Accounts: Subject to internal audit**: 2 discrepancies noted, one relating to Somerset Landscapes, which was checked and confirmed. (Paid in Qtr 2). A second one relating to a payment of the heating bill from April for £8.00 which doesn't appear in the accounts. **Action: Clerk to check**. **Resolved, all in favour.**
b. **Feedback External PKF Audit:** No feedback yet received by the Clerk. Clerk confirmed she had chased on two occasions.
c. **NALC LGA Pay rates confirmation 25/26:** National NGA pay rates have been announced and legally have to be backdated to April 2025. New Clerks rate £14.82 ph. previously £14.36ph. **Resolved, all in favour.**
d. **Overpayment to Clerk £72.00 during changeover of WFH claim on quarterly expenses to monthly salary. Action: Clerk to repay to the PC**. It was also noted that there are some possible changes to HMRC rules relating to working from home in the pipeline.
e. **To Pay Any Routine Invoices:**
   i) P SLL invoice SLL36091 £123.66 + VAT: Resolved, all in favour.
f. **Delegated Powers Payments**
   i) **Clerks Salary £499.18 Gross, July 2025 and £499.18 Gross August 2025.** The Clerk explained there was currently a debate on Clerks being salaried monthly; especially for those Clerks whose only source of income is being a Clerk. Official guidance advised that Clerks salary can be paid by Standing Order but not Direct Debit and that only the gross figure should be minuted at month, at the discretion of the PC and Clerk. **Action: Clerk to contact NatWest Bank to set up a SO.**
   ii) **HMRC £112.13, July 2025 & £112.13 August 2025:** Notification of under payment of Employers NI, £77.81 Qtr 1 April 2025. **Clerk paid in Qtr 2. Resolved, all in favour.**
   iii) **SLL Invoice 35902 £247.32+VAT. (Refer to item 25/1361) Query resolved as invoice paid in Qtr 2.**
   iv) **Discussion relating to online banking authorisation:** Unlike cheques, online payments do not currently require dual signatories. Some Parish Councils still use dual authorisation systems, but many rely on the Clerk as RFO + audit trail. Current approach considered compliant, though risk acknowledged (in theory, the Clerk could misappropriate funds). There are some limited banking options available for dual-control online systems. **Resolved, all in favour.** Continue current system with transparency and audit oversight. **Action: Clerk to contact NatWest Bank and review the PCs Financial Standing Orders.**

25/1362 **Allotments:**

a. **Inspection with NAS South West Regional Advisor Lynda Clarke. The Clerk reported as follows:** The SW Regional Advisor was highly experienced and able to share her wealth of knowledge. She currently oversees over 300 plots with a waiting list of 178 plots, as well as being the SW regional representative. Seven plot holders attended the inspections and were able to talk to Lynda directly.

Key Outcomes: Overall there was a positive atmosphere on the day, but major concerns were raised regarding cultivation, weeds and neglected plots. Tenants who are actively cultivating their plots feel impacted by non-cultivated plots. There were a number of plots which did not meet the cultivation standards contained in Tenants' tenancy agreements.

Next Steps: Clerk to continue liaising with plot holders in the short term. **Action: A report to be compiled once discussions with the SW Representative, NAS and the Parish Council have taken place. Plot Status:** An experienced allotment holder is keen to take on plots 20C and 20D, subject to the weeds being strimmed and the hedge next to the plot cut back. **Action: Cllr Cawley agreed to cut the weeds back and the hedge. Clerk to notify new tenant.** Another potential tenant declined taking on a plot due to state of plots but wants to be kept updated if any new plots which are cultivated, become available. Once 20D is let, all plots will be filled and no vacancies remain.

25/1363 **Matters arising from 9th July 2025 meeting:**

a. **Dog Fouling update:** Previously discussed under item 25/1359/iv.
b. **Broken Swing at the Rec:** Broken baby swing at the recreation ground still unresolved due to a discrepancy over the manufacturers swing size and chain length. **Action: Clerk to send pictures of frame and swing to manufacturer.**

25/1364 **Reports & Correspondence:**

a. **Going Digital – Governance Update: The Clerk reported the** PC must move toward statutory requirements by April 2026. Emails may need to align with official standards (.gov accounts preferred, though Gmail currently accepted if correctly formatted).
b. **Withdrawal of support for Windows 10. GDPR implications for Councillors: Clerk r**eminded Councillors Windows 10 support will be withdrawn in October 2025 and they will need to consider implications for communication.
c. **Highways Enhanced Maintenance Update:** Maintenance issues ongoing. Reporting of potholes is currently proving effective. The more reports from the PC and residents, the greater likelihood in speedy repairs. The current pothole situation is considered to be manageable.
d. **Requests for Financial Support (Grants):**
   i) **Section 137 Community Benefit in absence of Grant Budget: It was agreed the PC would not budget for grants until the end of year.**
   ii) **Youth Football Club:** The PC had been in correspondence with the new Youth Football team**.** A discussion was held of the importance of supporting local clubs. It was confirmed that the Youth team had received an external grant and that the PC are keen to encourage youth sports and activities in the villages.
   iii) **Defibrillator On-Going maintenance: Action: it was agreed to budget for ongoing costs and installing a third defibrillator in the new budget. In the meantime Clerk to speak to Jane Naughton to see if the maintenance costs are required in the 26/27 budget.** The importance of public awareness of defibrillator locations was discussed. CPR training was also discussed with the possibility of organising a fundraising/community breakfast to support costs of training.
e. **Local Community Networks: No Update.**
f. **Devolution Update, including Somerset Finance Deficit. No further information received,**
g. **Grit Bins:** New bin being purchased to replace broken bin on Poop Hill. SC has confirmed it will be filling bins 25/26. Clerk has asked for an extension on the time to check bins as she was excluded from the original email asking for levels of salt. **Action: Cllr Cawley to check the level of salt in the grit bins and report back to Clerk.**
h. **Clerk Report, by exception 10th July 2025 – 10th September 2025.** Nothing to report which hasn't already been included in the Minutes.
i. **Footpaths:** Recent gate replacement on a footpath at the Lower Street Entrance to the Recreation Ground has been completed successfully, with thanks from residents.

j. **Scott's Way Riverbank Maintenance: No further Update**

k. **Parish Councillor Recruitment:** The Chair stressed the need for more Parish Councillors as the PC is two Councillors down. He suggested that local clubs and organisations be asked to consider joining the PC in order to strengthen representation, in particular those clubs using the recreation ground as discussions on the recreation ground will be taking place in the future.

l. **Antisocial Behaviour:** Ongoing incidents in the villages, with several police visits. Noted higher police presence. Residents are urged to **report every incident to the police** (even if little response expected). **Action: Clerk to continue to liaise with the Community Police teams.**

m. **Drains, Potholes and Hedges by exception:** Hedge cutting season has resumed. Blocked drains are being reported.

25/1365 **Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday 8th October 2025 Agenda.**

a. **Agenda items, including Members Reports:** To be forwarded to the Clerk before Friday 3rd October 2025

Meeting closed at 8.35pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 8th October 2025

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock