

## WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

### **Draft minutes of the ordinary meeting of Winsford Parish Council held on Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 19.00 pm in Winsford Village Hall**

Present: Councillors Colin Wilkins (CW) - Chair, Ian Brooks (IB), Mel Mileham (MM), Kevin Connell (KC), Mike Hillier (MH), Sarah Little (SL), Bryany Neal (BN) and Clerk Jennifer Yates (JY). Somerset Councillors Steven Pugsley (SP) and Frances Nicholson (FN) attended part of the meeting.

CW opened the meeting at 19.03.

**88.1 Public Question Time:** None

**88.2 Apologies for non-attendance:** Cllr Sarah Little

**88.3 Declaration of Interests:** None

**88.4 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held 27<sup>th</sup> October, and any outstanding actions:** The footbridge alongside the ford has not yet been dealt with, but assurance has been given that it has been registered as needing maintenance. Discussion took place re Edbrooke dip. The drain cover in Howtown Lane has been reported, along with another which was blocked. There has been no further action re setting up emergency access to the village hall. MM has liaised with Mr Harding re getting the Christmas tree delivered in the first week of December. MH will organise setting it up and it will be decorated by Mr and Mrs Hunt. The minutes were approved as a true record; proposed BN, seconded MH, approved by all.

Actions: MH kindly offered to visit Edbrooke dip to check the status of the bridge so that CW can put it onto the reporting portal if necessary.

CW will report the potholes which are beginning to encroach onto the highway from the car park.

MH will follow up with fellow members of the Village Hall committee re access in emergency situations and it being named the official place of safety for the Parish following up from their meeting earlier in the year.

**88.6 To consider Highways Matters;**

**a) Yellowcombe Leat and Halse Lane:** The situation has changed re Yellowcombe Leat as it has now collapsed and CW has been involved in regular correspondence with the County Highways team keeping them up to date. They have acknowledged that this needs to be dealt with and are proposing to carry out works on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The local supervisor, Mr Paul Keele, has explained that they plan to install new piping and extend it further than previously. MH has found paperwork that would appear to indicate that County Highways have assumed ownership of Yellowcombe Leat as they have worked on it previously but this has not been confirmed as yet. The County Highways team hope that by carrying out these works it will alleviate the pressure on the drain at the bottom of the hill, but this will be monitored. However, CW pointed out to their team that there is still

a great deal of water running off the fields, and the drain is not currently able to take it all. There is also water coming from the wall by the new houses in Halse Lane, adding to the water accumulation as no drainage of gulley was provided for the new development when it was constructed. The engineer has informed CW he will take a look at the drain by the pub and shop as there is water damage to the edge of the highway making it dangerous for both walkers and those using mobility vehicles. There have been two recent accidents on 21<sup>st</sup> November resulting in damage to vehicles in Halse Lane, both due to ice on the road, and resulting in a brief closure to the road. It was felt that it would be beneficial to propose to the Highways team that a drain system is needed, taking water from the top part of the hill where the water streams down the road causing icy conditions as this road is not on a salting route. It has been noted that similar projects have taken place in both Withypool and Exford. It was also mentioned that permanent signage warning drivers about the risk of ice on this road would be beneficial. County Highways did leave temporary warning signs when they closed the road following the incidents on 21<sup>st</sup> November and these have not been collected so could potentially be reused in the event of icy conditions. It was agreed that as there is now some momentum and resulting actions from the County Team it would be wise to maintain contact re the ongoing works and proposed ideas. CW will take the lead on this continuing the good work and liaison which has already taken place.

- b) Other Highways matters:** JY will liaise with Exton Parish Council about reporting the problems with flooding on the road to Coppleham. CW will report a further pothole in the junction near the war memorial.

**88.7 Complete the ENPA planning team Community Facilities and Open Spaces questionnaire:** This was gone through and corrections identified. JY will complete it and return it to the National Park team.

**88.8 Finance:**

- a) To receive the finance report and agree to pay the amounts due:** The report was approved; proposed KC, seconded IB. Payments were agreed for JY £694 Salary and Expenses Aug-Nov, HMRC £210.68 Tax and NI, Mr Edwards £158 for works carried out on the riverbanks.
- b) To set a date for budget planning and raise any ideas which need to be considered at that meeting:** The budget planning meeting was arranged for 14.00 on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January at the Village Hall. Items to be considered will be adopting the services of a salary payment company to deal with JY salary, and the need for a new cabinet for the defibrillator.

SP arrived at 20.00.

**88.5 Updates from Somerset Councillors:** With reference to Yellowcombe Leat SP mentioned that he is being kept well informed by Mr Keele and Mr Kali Martin. CW fed back the latest updates. SP advised that the landowner of the fields would be likely to be responsible for the water running onto the

roads. He acknowledged that the new houses are contributing to the drain capacity problem and also to the icy conditions, and that there is not sufficient capacity in the drain system on that road, pushing the water and detritus out towards the middle of the road in places. It was agreed to see what impact the works taking place on the Leat will have, and then see what follow up work may still need to take place, and the importance of discussing all of the above with Mr Keele. The icy conditions, possibility of warning signage re ice and lack of salting were discussed. SP advised that the only ice signage that would be likely to be put into place would be one with a flap to be lifted in wintry conditions, but then someone would be responsible for this. It was agreed it would be beneficial to see what is done in other areas.

FN arrived at 20.19

Discussion took place re the communication received by IB re the planned forestry works. There was disappointment expressed by all that there will be no further opportunity for this to be discussed and SP will bring it up at an ENPA meeting should the opportunity arise. It was felt by all at the meeting that the impact on the community and on the local landscape has not been recognised or considered appropriately.

The emergency planning meeting attended by MH and JY was mentioned, and it was felt that it was helpful to those who attended.

FN reported that there will be a housing needs online survey coming to all households in the area to identify and assess needs in all areas within the National Park. This will go alongside the LCN report on local housing which is due to be released in February. It is hoped to highlight the way in which housing needs are assessed, in that housing is needed not just for the homeless but also with people who are living with their families, or who have moved out of the area, as no accommodation is available. Also, it may raise a discussion point re the need for localised lettings policies as the people making the decisions may not fully understand the needs of isolated rural areas. CW mentioned his work on a housing survey within the village and SP mentioned that it is likely to be very helpful with upcoming housing work locally.

Works will be taking place at the bottom of Dunster Steep to replace the traffic signals during period between January and Easter. There will not be a full road closure but some disruption will take place. It appears that the works on the A396 Cutcombe Hill will take place during January and will involve a road closure during the period when work is taking place, and it is hoped this will be completed within a fortnight. Winsford Car Park is on the agenda for an upcoming meeting and SP will be in attendance.

SP and FN thanked Mrs Mileham for her hard work and contribution to the parish, and then left the meeting at 20.40,

**88.9 Arrangements re the upcoming Parish Councillor vacancy:** Notice cannot be given of the vacancy until the number of councillors has officially been reduced. JY will liaise with the Democratic Services team on the day after

this meeting to start the process. A notice then goes up for fourteen working days. It was agreed that should the process go to co-option it would be appropriate to request interested parties to write a letter expressing their interest and why they wish to serve the community.

**88.10 Winsford Village Green Trust;**

**a) To receive the finance report and agree to pay the amounts due:**

There are no payments to be paid this month.

**b) Village Green Maintenance:** It was noted that the work done in the river was very successful, and that further work will be beneficial in the Spring on the reeds and irises. MH has done some leaf clearance on the Green voluntarily. The rhododendrons on the Green will need to be cut back hard next Autumn.

**c) AOB: None**

**88.11 Correspondence and Emails received:** IB referred to the email he had received regarding the planned forestry developments at Withycombe and Upcott. The tone of the email from ENPA representative is of frustration and disappointment as it appears the schemes will go ahead with revised schedules and there was no opportunity for this to be further discussed within National Park meetings. Concern was again expressed about the impact on the local community and landscape, particularly at Withycombe. The final decision has not yet been made but it looks extremely likely that this will be passed soon.

**88.12 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended:** MH attended the flooding drop-in session. He mentioned the problem MM has raised previously that our local Environment Agency representatives are based in Devon. A lot of the meetings are attended by the Somerset representatives who cannot directly advise re local issues in the Parish. It was felt that the two branches of the EA do not liaise well with each other, but that the flood group organisers are now pushing for more support for this local area. MH also attended the recent emergency planning meeting with JY and fed back re issues arising from the focus on power outages. JY reported that another local parish at the meeting has purchased a gas powered generator which may be a better option for this parish and village hall. Also mentioned at the meeting were small portable solar panels and 'car' batteries which have USB ports where phone chargers and other items could be plugged in. These could be considered going forward with further grant applications. CW and JY attended the recent LCN meeting. He has also attended SALC training re Human Resources and fed back that it is recommended that the Parish Council set up a committee for HR purposes.

**88.13 Any Other Business:** Thanks were given to Mrs Mileham for her service, and the hard work she has given to the Parish Council over the last ten years. She was invited to attend the Annual Assembly in May. Mr Wilkins expressed his appreciation for her support and advice and presented her with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the Parish Council. Mrs Mileham

shared that she was sad to leave and appreciated the teamwork that she has been a part of. Also, she felt that by leaving now it would give her replacement over a year to be on the Council before the elections in May 2027.

**88.14 Items for Next Agenda:** Budget setting and precept arrangements.

**88.15 Date of Next meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 7.00 in Winsford Village Hall**

There being no further business CW closed the meeting at 21.15.