WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the ordinary meeting of Winsford Parish Council held on Monday, 27th October 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.

One member of the public attended the full meeting as an observer

CW opened the meeting at 19.03.

87.1 Public Question Time: None

87.2 Apologies for non-attendance: None

87.3 Declaration of Interests: None

87.4 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held 29th September, and any outstanding actions: 86.5 The repeater sign has been mended, thanks given to MH. The other sign needs to be dealt with by the Highways team and CW will use the portal to report it. 86.5b The inspector has been out, checked and followed up on the bridge surveys for all bridges. The supervisor was called to meet with CW re the Winn ford footbridge and it was agreed that work needs to be done, and this will be organised. The other bridges were declared to be in good condition. The bridge at Edbrooke dip was raised as a concern by MH and CW will visit this and make the necessary portal report. It was noted that the portal system does work well as anything that is formally reported in this way does appear to be followed up promptly. MH has collected a variety of road signs which are no longer relevant, and these will be collected by the Somerset Highways team. MH has checked and made some alterations to the misplaced drain cover in Howtown Lane but it needs further work from the highways team, CW to report using the portal system. 86.6 There is no update re access to the village hall in the event of an emergency, despite councillors attending a meeting with the village hall committee. This delays the parish having a declared Place of Safety. CW will follow up as this is a crucial matter and is an expectation of the Somerset Prepared team. 86.7 This is believed to be on the agenda for a meeting at the Exmoor National Park (ENPA) shortly. The minutes were approved with a couple of amendments to 86.7 and 86.12, and will be re-issued accordingly – proposed IB, seconded MH and agreed by all.

87.7 Discuss the ENPA planning checklist and complete the survey: It was agreed that as this is a long document it would be more appropriate for councillors to complete this individually outside of the meeting rather than as a council if they wish to do so as there is no requirement. IB had studied the document and completed the survey prior to the meeting and shared that there are some useful sections, in particular a diagram supporting the planning process (table 7 on page 15). He mentioned that it would appear that if this is passed in the proposed format it will be crucial for applicants to seek pre-planning advice, and that applications will be expected to be made online.

87.8 Finance: To receive the finance report and agree to pay the amounts due: Payments were agreed for CW £40 (reimbursement for purchase of poppy wreath),

MH £28.80 (travel expenses for attending the Somerset Prepared conference) and Somerset Art Works £30 as agreed at the last meeting. Proposed MM, seconded BN and agreed by all.

87.9 Discuss the issue of riparian ownership and the role of the Parish Council: The council wish to support riparian owners in understanding their responsibilities although information has been shared by MM previously. Concern was raised re the problem of trees entering the watercourse and causing issues for downstream properties and blocking/damaging bridges. Where land on each side of the river is owned by different people they each have responsibility for their side of the river if problems occur. JY was asked to liaise with Somerset Rivers Authority to share concerns and see if they could get involved in running a riparian ownership advice drop in session or if they would like to recommend or include another agency such as the Environment Agency. They may also be able to advise on what grants may be available for riparian owners. Information for local riparian owners has recently been put on the village noticeboard and JY will place this on the website with a link to the Flood Hub which has useful information.

87.10 Arrangements re the upcoming Parish Councillor vacancy and representation on the Flood Group: The clerk has now received the letter of resignation and will follow up accordingly. The electoral services team have been notified. Many thanks were given to MM for her sterling work with the Flood Group and parish resilience. MH recently attended the Somerset Prepared Conference with MM and was asked by CW if he would be prepared to take over this role going forward. This was proposed by KC, seconded by CW and agreed by all with thanks.

87.11 Arrangements for Christmas in the village, the tree and decorations: Mr and Mrs Hunt have kindly agreed to organise the tree decorations again. This was agreed with thanks. MM will arrange the tree purchase. The hole used for the tree is also used for the maypole and it was proposed that it might be used for a flagpole at appropriate times.

87.12 Winsford Village Green Trust;

a) To receive the finance report and agree to pay the amounts due: No payments were required this month. Report accepted and agreed, proposed KC, seconded MM.

b) Village Green Maintenance: Mr Edwards is known to have been unwell, and on his return will be asked to take on the clearance work in the river as he did last year.

c) AOB: There has recently been a problem with unsupervised children riding bicycles on the Village Green which has caused some damage. The sign which was prepared to go near the swings was recently updated to state that children need to be accompanied by responsible adults. It was agreed that if that is not being respected JY should draft a letter which could be used to follow up if needed.

SP arrived at 20.20 and FN arrived at 20.24

87.5 To consider Highways Matters: In addition to the items mentioned in 87.4 CW has been liaising with Tom Thurlow at ENPA re the car park. He is working with Somerset Council and has established their ownership of the land which is a big step forward. CW has spoken with Mr Bray to clarify this as he has previously believed he has had responsibility for the land. Mr Thurlow has a design and plans to make good the damage, and he has a grant available which potentially can be used for

improvements and repairs and will work with Somerset to move this forward. CW reported that some of the potholes are now encroaching onto the highway and it was agreed that this also needs to be reported via the portal. SP reported that the signs have been collected with thanks. MM raised concern about the current state of Yellowcombe Leat which is losing a lot of water onto the highway now and will cause significant risk during cold weather if it freezes. MH shared a photograph and SP/FN said that there remains the issue of ownership which is holding up repairs. JY will share the photo with the Highways team. It does seem to be that preventative repairs will not take place and it will need to collapse before work takes place. Advice was sought re the recent incident with a dog walker on Winsford Hill, and it was agreed that whilst it is a very unfortunate incident it is not a parish council matter.

87.6 Updates from Somerset Councillors: There is little to report at this time. MM mentioned her recent attendance at the Somerset Prepared event and asked what the Councillors are hearing at other meetings about the issue of providing power support in the event of a power outage. It was suggested that it may be worth contacting other parishes such as Brompton Regis who have bought a generator, and Oake who have bought a power pack.

87.13 Correspondence and Emails received: None

87.14 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended: JY attended the SALC annual conference. The government have introduced an English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill (Pride of Place) which is triggering a review at Somerset County of community engagement and development. Part of this will be a review of LCNs and it is clear that while our local LCN is excellent others across the County may be less effective. Another part of the review which may affect the Parish Council is a focus on supporting communities in becoming more self-reliant. JY obtained some information re a potential competitive website and email provider and will be following up for quotes as they can provide the Gov.UK domain name we are being encouraged to acquire. There is likely to be a further review of the code of conduct with training to follow which will be obligatory, but not in the near future. The possibility of local councils being asked to contribute towards costs of the monitoring officer. FN feels that that is very unlikely to be the case, but perhaps it may be that they may need to contribute in the event of the monitoring officer handling an issue. The date for the next election is likely to be 6th May 2027. Following this there will be a community governance review of parishes with some being merged, altered, grouped etc. SP and FN advised that is unlikely to affect this part of Somerset, it is more in the areas undergoing rapid growth of populations and buildings. Changes would come into effect in 2031. Mr Sharkey attended the conference at the end of the day and mentioned ongoing budgetary pressures on Somerset Council. They will be introducing a programme based on encouraging good health and healthy habits with work/diet/sleep etc in younger people so that people go into older age as healthier people.

MM and MH attended the Somerset Prepared event. They advised that more discussion and research is required re power in the event of a power outage. It would be aimed at making sure mobile phones, hearing aids etc are able to be charged up. It was suggested that a village WhatsApp group may be beneficial for emergency situations. The Rotary EVAG group are willing to visit individual homes to share information and suggest what could be done re flood prevention. MM feels that in general we are well prepared but the issue of the Place of Safety and temporary

power provision remain issues to be addressed. It was suggested that they should be invited to attend the Annual Assembly.

FN and SP left the meeting at 9.20

87.15 Any Other Business: CW mentioned that following the changes regarding National Insurance the PAYE system is more complicated and it may be worth considering employing an agency to manage the clerk salary arrangements.

87.16 Items for Next Agenda: JY Salary arrangements, Pre-budget suggestions to consider prior to the following budget setting meeting.

87.17 Date of Next meeting – 24th November 2025 at 7.00 in Winsford Village Hall

There being no further business CW closed the meeting at 9.25pm