

WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Winsford Parish Council Held on Monday 27th November 2023, at 19.00pm in Winsford Village Hall

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

CW opened the meeting at 19.01pm.

67.1 Public Question Time: None

67.2 Apologies for non-attendance: Councillors Sarah Little and Frances Nicholson

67.3 Declaration of Interests: MH item 5a

67.4 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held 25th September, and any outstanding actions: The minutes were approved, Proposed BN, seconded by MM and approved by all with the following amendment; 66.10 amend Dan Martin's job title to County Flood Management Lead. Comments – 66.7: Fraud Training – following discussion it was agreed it would be appropriate to combine this with the Annual Assembly.

67.5 a. To receive financial report and agree to pay amounts due: It was agreed to make the following payments; J Yates salary and expenses 1 Aug – 30 Nov £558.60, HMRC J Yates Tax £87.40, SALC £116.27 (training charge £25 and Annual Fee £91.27), M Hillier Car Park Maintenance £452.99 (Car Park Maintenance £441 and Padlock £11.99 from resilience grant), Risdon Hosegood Solicitors fees for field bequest (£1,325 from Ann Le Bas funds), C Wilkins Poppy Wreath £40, M Mileham first aid training expenses £21.65, Mr Beedin Bus Shelter Notice Board £28, Mr Fowler Bus Shelter £2,640, Castle and Barry concrete bench bases £240. Payments were agreed – proposed IB, seconded KC.

Discussion took place re the difficulty of having to use cheques as they can be unrepresented by the recipients for months. SP suggested some other bodies are using a different bank and gave details, JY to follow up. It was also proposed that a card could be used if the payments were agreed at meetings as currently.

b. To set a date for Precept budget planning: Provisional date set as 11th January at 2.30.

SP arrived at 19.20

67.10 Update re Ann Le Bas Bequest – field: CW reported that the papers have been received and checked, with the dates aligning with the existing lease as requested. The solicitors have now submitted the papers to the Land registry and requested payment. Payment will be from the proceeds of the Art sales as previously agreed.

67.12 To discuss the Somerset Council Asset and Service Devolution Letter: SP fed back that Somerset are trying to avoid having to issue a 114 notice declaring bankruptcy as this would mean the Government sending in a commissioner team and making decisions on the way forward. They are trying to find internal savings and while all non-statutory services may be cut SP suggested that reduced highways services are the most likely to affect this Parish, with devolved services which may include Winter Salt Bins, Gully clearances, verge and bank trimming, and potentially the Highway Steward. It may be that the LCN could take responsibility for some of this with each

Parish Council purchasing the services from them, however it is too soon to say as the Council are actively working on their budgeting. The LCN being able to coordinate this could rely on staff not being made redundant. Initial estimates would indicate each Parish may need to contribute up to £1,000 for each service the LCN would coordinate, but this is hypothetical at this point. The discussions taking place at County level could result in the precept budget setting meeting and Precept deadline being delayed to allow for clarification to come out re what assets and services will be discontinued.

67.9 To discuss Winsford Car Park and Somerset Council's contribution re upkeep: As this is a County Council asset which is likely to stop receiving support due to the Council's financial position it was agreed that JY will contact the devolution team with regard to what the situation is with the Parish Council taking some responsibility on with regard to the Car Park, either on a lease or permanent agreement. This will be discussed further at the next meeting once more information is available.

67.14 To consider Highways Matters;

a) Yellowcombe Leat: SP reported that Cllr Nicholson is repeatedly bringing this up at meetings. The hold up is that there is still no evidence as to ownership, but her argument is that ownership is not relevant if it does collapse because at that point it will become a highways issue. MH mentioned that some temporary repairs have been done.

b) Exford Road planned closure: The diversion will lead to increased traffic through the village for three to four months. There are concerns that additional traffic will use Thorne Lane and Oldrey Lane, signs will be put in place stating that they are not diversion routes. Upcott Lane, Quarme Lane and Furzehill Lane were also mentioned as a potential cut throughs and would benefit from signage. All these cut throughs would benefit from increased police presence due to the additional traffic. CW will attend the meeting to be held shortly where arrangements will be discussed. It is hoped that there will be some contingency to let some traffic through the roadworks to relieve pressure on the surrounding roads. It was suggested that a temporary speed limit may be beneficial for safety reasons, and it will be mentioned at the meeting.

c) Other highways matters: Fly tipping is the landowner's responsibility. The local authority can become involved to enforce removal, through the environmental health team.

Grit bins have not yet been filled, SP said this is in hand.

67.13 Reports from Somerset Councillors: Mainly covered in sections 67.9 and 69.12. The Empty Homes officer is aware of the property in Ash Lane. Council tax levies will be higher for empty homes from April 2024. Compulsory purchase is not an option. The LCN housing group are developing a strategic approach and relevant policies.

Thanks were expressed to both Cllr Pugsley and Cllr Nicholson for their hard work and efforts to resolve multiple issues on behalf of the parish.

67.11 Update re the Halse Lane Mast: A new mast has appeared at The Old Sportsman and it appears to be complete. CW has not had a response from the planners re Halse Lane mast, however it will need to go through planning as they wish to raise it by 2.4

metres. MM has received feedback from the Home Office on 3rd November re the masts at Tarr Farm and Kitridge farm in Withypool. The Tarr Farm mast should be providing Emergency Services Network coverage by the end of 2024, with a possibility of it being upgraded to provide Shared Rural Network (SRN) coverage later. The Withypool mast should be on the Emergency Services Network by July 2024. This mast has been upgraded already to be able to provide SRN coverage which would allow other mobile phone operators to use it.

SP left the meeting at 20.40

67.6 Discuss the revised Code of Conduct: This was adopted in full – Proposed KC, Seconded CW, agreed by all. JY to follow up with monitoring officer and put it onto the website.

67.7 To discuss Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) who have requested feedback on their offer: JY has passed on thanks to Justin who is leaving and they are now recruiting. Suggested feedback was that it would be beneficial if face to face meetings could be held more centrally, it would be helpful if they could cash cheques more promptly, training and advice is consistently good but it can be difficult to get hold of someone at times. JY will feed back.

67.8 To discuss Exmoor Youth Club: A number of children from the Parish do attend on a regular basis. Funds are needed to support the continuation of the Club. It was discussed and agreed that the Youth Club is good socially for the children who attend, helping to keep them active and involved in the community. KC mentioned that there is no formal process in place for the Parish Council to select which charities and good causes to support and it would be beneficial to put this in place for future requests, and this will be a future agenda item. CW proposed a one off donation on this occasion of £100, to be taken from the Ann Le Bas fund which will support the children from the Parish who attend. This was seconded by MH and all agreed.

67.15 Winsford Charitable Trust

- a) **Maintenance of the Village Green:** New volunteers are not coming forward and the riverbanks/rhododendrons will need to be dealt with twice yearly. A specification of works needs to be drawn up (MH and MM) so the work can be put out to tender.
- b) **Financial Report:** CAFCash £5,299.95, payments to be agreed; Concrete base £240, Village Green Maintenance £490, CW registration fees £11.94. Payments agreed, proposed MM, seconded KC. CAFGold £2,221.75. Aegon £24,116.30
- c) **Grant Funds:** The £4,000 grant received has been placed into this account and it was agreed that it should be used for three new benches and bases with any remaining funds being used for the skittle alley and/or slats, proposed KC, seconded BN. JY to contact the charity commission re the status of VAT for the Trust.
- d) **Wooden Slats on Bridge:** These are due shortly.
- e) **Update re Trust registration:** CW working with Risdon Hosegood. MM has found relevant historical information which was requested. KC expressed the need for it to remain registered to the Trust, once the Trust name is confirmed as the Trust members will always be the Council, whereas if it was registered to the Council difficulties would come every time Councillors changed.
- f) **AOB:** MM will arrange for delivery of a Christmas tree for the Village Green and MH will arrange for it to be put up. Mr Hunt will be decorating it.

67.16 Correspondence and Emails received: A query has been received re some parking issues in Ash Lane. It is unknown whether the verges and pull in parking in that area are County Council property, or privately owned and the advice would be to view the deeds. The Parish Council would be unable to comment further as the ownership is unknown.

A letter has been received requesting that the Agendas and Minutes are published promptly. The clerk will aim to release the minutes within a fortnight of the meeting as the meeting itself, and preparation, takes up her working hours during that week.

67.17 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended: CW attended the LCN meeting. Working groups have now been set up and are beginning to carry out their roles. Other discussions were largely re County Council finances.

67.18 Any Other Business: None

67.19 Items for Next Agenda: Village Car Park, Defibrillator, Budget/Precept, discuss and agree criteria for Charity donations.

67.20 Date of Next meeting: 15th January 2023 at 7.00 in Winsford Village Hall

There being no further business CW thanked all who attended, wished everyone a good Christmas period and closed the meeting at 21.28.