WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Winsford Parish Council held on Tuesday 27th May 2025, at 19.00pm in Winsford Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillors: Colin Wilkins (CW) – Chair, Ian Brooks (IB), Mel Mileham (MM), Mike Hillier (MH) and Clerk Jennifer Yates (JY).

One member of the public attended part of the meeting.

JY opened the meeting at 19.00

83.1 Election of Chairman: Councillor Colin Wilkins was re-elected as Chairman. Nominated MM, Seconded IB, agreed by all. Cllr Wilkins took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

83.2 Election of Vice-Chairman: Councillor Kevin Connell was re-elected as Vice-Chairman. Nominated IB, Seconded MH, agreed by all.

83.3 Public Question Time: None

83.4 Apologies for non-attendance: Cllrs Bryany Neal, Kevin Connell and Sarah Little.

83.5 Declaration of Interests: MM item 16

83.6 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held 28th April, and any outstanding actions: MM mentioned that in item 82.7 it had been IB who had supported the two properties with sewage problems. JY will amend the minutes accordingly. The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting, proposed MH, seconded IB, agreed by all.

83.7 To agree dates and times of meetings for the next year: The following dates were agreed; 30th June, 28th July, 29th September, 27th October, 24th November, 12th January, 23rd February, 30th March, 27th April and 26th May. The Annual Assembly will be held on Thursday 14th May 2026.

83.8 Report from Somerset Councillors: No Councillors available (change of day).

83.9 To consider Highways Matters: CW met with the local surveyor who was checking the roads for potholes and other condition issues. Discussion took place re the car park and it was confirmed this does belong to the County Council but they are only looking at issues on the actual highway currently so he was not able to offer support re the poor state of the car park. CW pointed out the drain cover above the ford on Ash Lane, which was recently worked on but has already dipped again. MH mentioned a problem with one in Halse Lane which has also dipped again and will need work. Numerous potholes were noted by the surveyor for attention. IB reported that there is an indefinite delay on the work to the bridge at Larcombe Foot due to capital investment issues. Concern was raised that the verges and gullies have not been done yet on the Exford Road. MM mentioned that concern has been raised to her re Upcott Lane and Furzhill Lane with regard to them being used by unsuitable vehicles. They are single track roads but Sat Navs are directing all sorts of vehicles to try to use them. It was suggested that we should approach the County Council about putting signage on these roads suggesting that they are unsuitable for larger vehicles and/or access only. JY will follow up. It was noted that Mr Bridgwater has now left due to the budget cuts at County level and Mr Kali Martin is now the only engineer for this area.

83.10 Feedback from speeding survey: CW reported that he has received feedback from the local traffic police re the speeding survey that has recently taken place on the stretch of road outside the village hall, for traffic coming through the village from the Exford direction. They found that 85% of traffic was driving within the speed limit, and the vehicle volume count was low. Therefore, no further traffic monitoring will take place at this time. This was received as good news though a little surprising. MH suggested that a further survey would be useful at a different time of year, perhaps during the summer holidays or winter shooting/hunting season.

83.11 **Discuss Cattle Grazing issues on Winsford Hill:** This issue has been raised over a period of time by a number of parishoners who regularly walk or ride on Winsford Hill and have reported to Natural England and some Parish Councillors that the paths have become very muddy and spoiled. Mr Thomas-Everard attended the meeting as the cattle belong to him and he manages the land from Comers Gate to Mounsey Hill Gate. He mentioned that it had been a particularly wet winter, especially February, which had exacerbated the problem, but also that as part of the gorse management they have cut back gorse in certain areas, which has had the knock-on effect of channelling the cattle through the paths in between causing the ground to be very muddy. They move the supplementary feeding between different areas on the Hill to draw the livestock away from the worst affected areas. It was acknowledged by all that the landscape on Winsford Hill has changed greatly over the years with much more development of the gorse which is not a popular foodstuff for the animals. Whilst problematic as a foodstuff this has had the positive effect of encouraging the birdlife using the area, as noted by the RSPB. Mr Thomas-Everard and his team have been monitoring the vegetation and wildlife patterns for several years. Natural England oversee the management of the moorland, issuing restrictions on the number of livestock who can be put on the land and do monitor the impact. They should be the initial contact for concerned parishioners as they work with the landowner to manage the land. Their restrictions have meant that due to limitations on livestock numbers there are cattle on the land, and a much less intensive impact from livestock on the environment (40 years ago there would have been 7-8 times the amount of livestock on this patch of land). This has resulted in the gorse becoming more widespread, however work has taken place so that bracken has been reduced improving access in some areas.

The cattle which are on Winsford Hill have been specifically chosen for their suitability to be on moorland all year round, the breed having been developed on a Scottish Island. They are known to be not only hardy, but have a placid nature. It was discussed that walkers should keep those dogs on leads anyway during the ground bird nesting season, and it was recognised that the cattle will be more protective when they have young calves and approaching them with dogs is not advisable at any time.

Mr Thomas-Everard has applied for a grant to introduce No Fence Collars to the cattle on Winsford Hill. This works by each animal wearing a collar which is linked via a signal with the landowner's software. This software maps the area and the cattle can be controlled (via vibrating in the collars) in which area they should be, giving the option to move them away from areas they tend to gather too frequently causing the damage. This has proved successful in other local areas and following discussion the Parish Council are supportive of

this initiative which shows the potential to help greatly, along with supplementary feeding being moved.
MM mentioned the new initiative from ENPA encouraging visitors to visit the outdoors for health reasons. It was suggested that it would be very beneficial to put more signage on the Hill about driving at low speed and being aware of animals on the road as cattle have been hit recently with injuries and two deaths, with the signage also including information re ground nesting bird season and stressing no overnight stays. It was mentioned that this signage has been discussed and agreed with ENPA and the Parish Council would support this, following up to ENPA and Somerset Council who would place these signs.
Following the long discussion Mr Thomas-Everard left the meeting. It was acknowledged that the management of the land is not straightforward due to the involvement of other agencies and the discussion had been very informative and helpful. It was noted that damage is also done by hunting activity, with quad bikes in particular ploughing up the ground.

83.12 Review the Annual Assembly May 15th 2025: It was acknowledged that this was successful and well attended despite there being another event in the village on the evening. There has been good feedback and interest following Mel Mileham's talk on the village archive.

83.13 Finance:

a) **To agree insurance renewal:** This was agreed.
b) **To receive financial report and agree to pay amounts due:** Payments were agreed for Mowing £130, JY salary and expenses £233.75, Village archive £99.99, CW expenses for the annual assembly refreshments £14.37, West Somerset Flood Group £5 and Zurich Insurance £457.97.

83.14 Winsford Charitable Trust

a) **Financial Report:** Payment was agreed for £130 for mowing and tidying around the war memorial.
b) **AOB:** No further progress re the chainlink fence. MH has examined it and assessed the materials needed (3 strands and chainlink) would cost approximately £300 potentially. It is suspected this may be picked up as a health and safety issue at the upcoming play equipment inspection. The bin has been ordered. CW has selected a stand-alone bleed kit, JY is negotiating with the company re paying by cheque.

83.15 Correspondence and Emails received: Somerset Bus Partnership has requested a named member of the parish council for their communications and meetings. Mike Hillier has agreed to represent the parish. An email had been received re the cattle on Winsford Hill, addressed above.

83.16 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended: MH recently attended a Village Hall AGM meeting. It was agreed that a generator will not be purchased at this time. It was agreed to follow up with the County Team re what other parishes are doing, MM fed back that another parish in the Flood Group have been told they have to purchase one that is wired in and automatic Another local parish are considering solar panels and a power wall, but concern was raised that this would not be effective in winter months. MM and KC attended the Exmoor Society meeting. MM reported that there had been a lot of enthusiasm and good ideas raised. She fed back that it has been noted that there are dangerous levels of medications entering the water systems/rivers. It is more of an issue in the summer months when there are a

lot of visitors and when dogs are in the water more. ENPA are concerned that a lot of owners use flea treatments which kill off invertebrates in the water and it would be advisable to keep those dogs out of the water. A comment will be put on the website. The use of sheep dip and potential dispersal into the water system was also discussed. The outflow of sewage overflow from the sewage plant at Edbrooke showed as 96 times in 2023. This totalled 1,262 hours (or 57 days non-stop). MM also attended the West Somerset Flood Group meeting and has shared the minutes with Councillors.

83.17 Any Other Business: MM brought up the issue of ENPA planning policy and uPVC windows. Following further discussion it was agreed to write to ENPA with further comments expressing the need for revision of their position about wooden windows for new properties when some properties in the village do have uPVC. Furthermore, it is acknowledged by the Parish Council that improvements in uPVC mean that they are preferable in terms of cost, maintenance, longevity and efficiency, and they are now available in a variety of designs and details and can be recycled. The aim is for local affordable homes in the area and the cost of wooden windows is very high in comparison, so the policy is in opposition to this. The Parish Council are very keen to support young families remaining in the village. JY will write to explain the Parish Council position on this issue.

83.18 Items for Next Agenda: None

83.19 Date of Next meeting – 30th June 2025 at 19.00 in Winsford Village Hall

There being no further business CW closed the meeting at 21.07