

## WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

### **Draft minutes of the ordinary meeting of Winsford Parish Council held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 19.00 pm in Winsford Village Hall**

Present: Councillors Colin Wilkins (CW) - Chair, Ian Brooks (IB), Mike Hillier (MH), Sarah Little (SL), Bryany Neal (BN) and Clerk Jennifer Yates (JY). Somerset Councillor Steven Pugsley (SP) attended part of the meeting.

Also present: Sam Winzer (SW).

CW opened the meeting at 19.00.

**89.1 Public Question Time:** None

**89.2 Apologies for non-attendance:** Cllr Kevin Connell and Somerset Cllr Frances Nicholson

**89.3 Declaration of Interests:** None

**89.4 To co-opt a new Councillor to the Parish Council:** All councillors had read Sam Winzer's letter of application and were prepared to vote. Her election was accordingly approved with all councillors present voting in favour of her becoming a Winsford Parish Councillor. She signed the declaration of acceptance and from this point forward took part in the meeting as a full councillor.

SP arrived at 19.05

**89.5 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held 24th November, and any outstanding actions:** The minutes were approved as a true record; proposed BN, seconded SL, approved by all.

**89.6 Discuss the Exmoor Housing Survey due to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> February:** This will be carried out online only. Paper copies can be obtained from Dulverton library and JY has requested some copies are sent to the parish. SP explained it is to help build a picture of what is going to be needed in ten years time based on who is living here now, numbers of young people etc. It goes across the whole of Exmoor National Park and the results will help inform the new Local Plan. CW asked how council tax works with regard to second homes and SP confirmed it is the responsibility of the home owners to declare which is their principal residence.

**89.7 Updates from Somerset Councillors:** The County budget will be finalised within the next three weeks. There appears to be no push to devolve further services at this time. However, there is still a significant shortfall. SP mentioned that it is being considered whether holiday let properties should be required to opt out of council services re waste collection. CW mentioned that it has been noted that the Parish Council precept will be paid in two instalments this year, allowing the County to hold onto significant funds until September, potentially making interest on those funds in the meantime helping with their shortfall. CW raised the issue that at least two residents

have been trying to connect with the Council Tax team at County by phone, and have been kept on hold for over an hour waiting to be connected which does not appear to be good customer service. SP will feed back to the relevant team.

**89.8 To consider Highways Matters;**

- a. Update re Yellowcombe Leat:** It was noted that although work has taken place in Halse Lane, and the level of water running down the road has been reduced, there is still water running onto the road. SP encouraged the councillors to keep Kali Martin and Paul Keele informed. One of the problem areas does appear to be where the new houses were built where water is pouring out from the wall and no additional drains have been supplied. However, the work that has taken place has relieved pressure on the drains at the bottom of the hill and thanks and appreciation were expressed for that.  
Action – CW will follow up with Joe White on the planning team to see if this was considered during the planning process for these dwellings
- b. Winter Maintenance: Salt bags and bins:** SP thanked IB for his recent intervention regarding salt bin levels, and providing the County with up to date information. He acknowledged that there has been an issue with communication between the county and the contractor. IB has identified a software issue which is likely to have affected this, and has informed the County team. Also, it does appear that the contractor had not ‘topped up’ bins that had some salt in them already. However, it is hoped that the new information provided by IB will result in the bins and bags being attended to shortly.
- c. Any Other Business:** The car park was mentioned, SP will be seeing Mr Thurlow at an upcoming meeting and will raise the issue in the hope of obtaining an update. CW mentioned that repairs to the handrails on the Winn Ford bridge have been agreed with the county team.

SP left the meeting at 19.37

**89.9 To discuss the car park reconstruction:** No significant progress appears to have been made, although it was recognised that Mr Thurlow is in negotiation with the County team regarding this matter. Concern was raised re liability in the event of an accident due to the potholes, and it was confirmed that it belongs to the highways team currently.

Action: CW will invite Mr Thurlow to attend an upcoming meeting.

**89.10 Finance:**

- a. To receive financial report and agree to pay amounts due:** The level of ringfenced funds were discussed. It was agreed that MH will raise the issue of the Ann Le Bas prints donated to the village hall at their next meeting, and offer to use the remaining ringfenced funds held by the Council to frame those prints so that they can be displayed. It was felt

that she would approve this gesture. The remaining prints are now with the Parochial Church Council should anyone wish to view or purchase one. There will be further costs registering the remaining parcels of land she left to the Parish Council, one of which was agreed at the meeting.

The finance report was approved and payments agreed as follows;

JY Salary and Expenses Dec-Jan.	£332.90
HMRC Tax	£71.20
Society for Local Council Clerks (50%)	£58
Mr C. Wilkins (flowers)	£15
Mr S. Hunt (Christmas decorations)	£36
Exmoor Society subscription	£25
Risdon Solicitors (land registry)	£320
<b>Total</b>	<b>£858.10</b>

Proposed IB, seconded MH, approved by all

- b. To agree the precept request for 2026-2027:** CW, KC, BN and JY met on 21<sup>st</sup> January to pre-plan the budget which was then shared with councillors for their approval. Discussion took place during this meeting regarding the continued support for payments re the archive and this was agreed. Going forward it is uncertain how long Mrs Mileham will wish to continue to carry out this work. It was acknowledged that her knowledge is invaluable, but it is time consuming and costly, and in future perhaps people wishing to search family history may need to take on some of this cost themselves. It was agreed to continue the membership of the Exmoor Society and the Society for Local Council Clerks. It was agreed that the box housing the defibrillator would benefit from an upgrade and funds were put into the budget to cover this and new pads. There was a reduction in the amount allocated to the highways budget due to the apparent agreement from the County they would not devolve tasks to the Parish Council this year, but as they have yet to agree their budget and will have a shortfall it was agreed to be prudent and maintain some funding in the budget for highways matters, which can be used towards maintenance and replacement of salt bins and other issues.

The budget proposal was agreed. This resulted in the precept request being agreed as being exactly the same as last year, with 0% increase, showing a difference of -8.46% on a band D property. Proposed MH, Seconded SW, approved by all.

**89.11 Winsford Village Green Trust**

- a. **Finance Report:** This was approved, no payments are due.
- b. **AOB:** It was noted that a neighbour is doing works to make repairs to the damaged fencing which is their responsibility. Mr Edwards has been asked to carry out works to the rhododendrons at the appropriate time as they need a hard cut. CW mentioned that there may be a request for a further bench, perhaps by the war memorial, but this is not confirmed at this time. Action: MH will take a look at the donated bench to check on whether any maintenance is required.

**89.12 Correspondence and Emails received:** None

**89.13 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended:** CW and JY attended the recent LCN meeting. The issues to discuss have been covered in the items above.

**89.14 Any Other Business:** CW mentioned that the noticeboard has become very wet inside.

**89.15 Items for Next Agenda:** Halse Lane and the car park

**89.16 Date of Next meeting – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 at 7.00 in Winsford Village Hall**

There being no further business CW closed the meeting at 20.27