WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the ordinary meeting of Winsford Parish Council held on Monday, 4th August 2025 at 19.00 pm in Winsford Village Hall

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

CW opened the meeting at 19.05. He thanked the councillors for their attendance following the change of date at short notice.

85.1 Public Question Time: None

85.2 Apologies for non-attendance: None

85.3 Declaration of Interests: None

85.4 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held 30th June, and any outstanding actions: Thanks were given to KC for writing the minutes of this meeting. The play inspection report has now been shared. There were two areas to follow up on, the new bin needed to be fixed in place and this has now been carried out. Secondly the notice which has been prepared needs to be placed, and to be updated to include references to the nearby watercourses and that it is the responsibility of parents to supervise their children at all times. CW proposed placing the sign into a frame to protect it. The fence was not mentioned, but the Trustees will continue to monitor this. The bench in the car park is now repaired and replaced. BN has carried out inspections of the defibrillator and updated the labelling. She has registered the bleed kit onto the national register.

85.5 Planning: GDO 25/08

LOCATION: Existing Airwave Emergency Services Communications, Land at Luckyard Farm, Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 7HE
PROPOSAL: Prior approval for the proposed extension to existing lattice tower from 20.8m to 24.8m in height to accommodate the installation of 3 x new 'Shared Rural Network ('SRN') 4G antennae at 15.7m to the centre line, along with ground based cabinets.

Following discussion it was agreed to support this proposal. The improved mobile service is of benefit to the local community and improves their safety.

85.6 To consider Highways Matters;

a) Discussion re communications from Somerset re the use of volunteers: There have been two recent communications from Somerset County regarding training volunteers to carry out certain tasks which are currently carried out by the County using contractors. This follows on from previous communications and appears to be the intended process going forward although that is not yet confirmed. There are financial implications for the Parish Council in that it is very likely a higher level of insurance would be needed, Chapter Eight training would be likely to be needed for the organiser of any tasks and also there would need to be PPE and equipment for anyone carrying out tasks. MM proposed that before beginning the process of training and exploring costs it would be beneficial to explore whether it would be possible to enlist any volunteers for such tasks. It was agreed to put together a notice explaining that the Parish Council, on behalf of Somerset Council, are looking for potential volunteers, and to list the suggested tasks on the notice. It was felt that while this proposed scheme may work well in towns it would be very difficult to manage in a parish, particularly one with a small population, and that there is a lack of understanding

within the County team who are putting this scheme into place. Further discussion took place regarding the potential high cost of using Keir (Somerset have arranged for them to be available for hire by Parish and Town Councils) and whether there may be a potential lengthsman service available in the area which could be used in conjunction with other parishes.

b) Verge Trimming in the lanes: This does appear to have now taken place, with the sides of hedges in lanes with no verges being also cut back.

c) AOB: There are concerns re the condition of the bridge over the Winn at the ford. The rail is rotten, and there are gaps between the flagstones where the mortar has deteriorated. There are also some stones missing from the actual ford crossing. This will all be reported to the Highways and Bridges teams. Markings have been sprayed onto the letterbox drains on a section of the Exford Road, it is anticipated that works will be taking place to clear these drains within the next month. There is a section of road in Halse Lane near Rose Cottage which has subsided following repairs carried out to the water main by Wessex Water last winter.

85.8 Discuss the water pipe behind the riverside properties: The deterioration of the concrete housing is worst where it crosses at the junction between the Winn and the Exe. The Environment Agency did express concern at the condition of this housing when they came to sample the water at the site. JY has reported this to South West Water but will call again to update with the above. It was being treated as 'non-urgent' due to the lack of seepage and spillage at this time. The Parish Council is keen to be pro-active rather than reactive in this case to prevent contamination of the river.

SP arrived at 19.35.

85.7 Updates from Somerset Councillors: CW raised the issue of use of volunteers for carrying out certain highways tasks. SP is intending to invite the organisers of the scheme to the Local Community Network (LCN) meeting (possibly the Highways sub-committee) to discuss the viability of the scheme within small rural parishes, and the potential costs of insurance and equipment making it difficult for them to put it into action. He fed back that the clerk of another local parish had tried out the system and has declared that this is likely to be too complicated for small parishes due to the level of detail needed (who/where/when/how etc), and the limited number of hours worked by clerks of small parishes. The online training is quite general and for certain tasks Chapter Eight training would be needed. The team who have been carrying out the Exmoor Signpost Project works have been successful and may be a good model to follow. He reiterated that it is likely that the best way forward is for a group of parishes to band together and split costs for purchased services.

SP confirmed that the damage on the bridge over the ford should be reported to the Bridges and Structures team.

Somerset are embarking on a transformation programme with the aim of identifying further areas in which they can cut costs as they are again facing a large deficit in next year's budget at this time. This is likely to affect the way teams are structured, and potentially lead to further staffing cuts.

The Exmoor National Park planning team are now working effectively and positively. They have carried out local roadshows and introduced their team including a new enforcement officer.

Regarding Highways there have been two notable large accidents recently. The coach crash was a learning experience in how a community can pull together to respond to an emergency situation with the village hall, public house and school all becoming involved in providing places of safety and support, with others supporting by providing transport etc. This may be an agenda item at a future LCN meeting. The other accident in the Exton Parish was partly due to faded junction markings. It was noted that there are a number of other road markings in the area are also faded and potentially dangerous. JY to contact Kate Brown at Highways.

SP left the meeting at 20.11.

85.9 Finance;

a) To receive the finance report and agree to pay the amounts due: Payments were agreed for JY £1026.41 (Back pay, two months salary and reimbursement for purchase of bleed kit), HMRC £187.60 and N.Edwards car park maintenance £130. Proposed BN, seconded KC, Agreed by all. It was agreed that the bleed kit would be paid for from the remaining resilience grant.

b) To agree the annual AGAR return: Following discussion it was agreed by all that the forms were correct for submission, and were signed by clerk and chair.

c) To agree and sign documents for a new deposit account and agree the opening deposit amount: It had been previously agreed at a previous meeting that NS&I were difficult to get information from and that moving the deposit account to NatWest would make it easier to transfer money between accounts when necessary. It was agreed to proceed and to transfer the amount of £10,000 initially with the view that this can be moved back when needed. This will bring the reserve to over the recommended 50% of precept. Proposed KC, Seconded BN, approved by all.

85.10 Parish resilience and preparedness;

a) To complete the Somerset Rivers Authority survey: The Councillors worked together to complete the survey. MM's hard work in the area of village resilience and preparedness, including the resilience plan, recent first aid training for 25 people and the central resilience equipment store, was very beneficial in providing positive responses to some of the questions. In some areas the Parish Council would welcome the support of the Somerset Prepared team, and potentially funding for further equipment, training and guidance.

b) Update re Village Place of Safety and access: One of the outcomes from the recent coach accident was the swift use of Wheddon Cross village hall as a place of safety. Therefore, the Parish Council is keen to move forward with the placement of the keysafe as a matter of urgency. Discussion took place regarding generators and power packs and the need to move forward with this too.

85.11 Update re the Ann Le Bas legacy: JY has been in communication with Courtyard Framing re the remaining 16 prints. They continue to feel that due to a flooded market they would not be able to sell the prints at this time. The Parish Council are keen to close this matter and will collect the prints. It was decided that Miss Le Bas would approve of the prints remaining within the village community and that they will be taken to the village fete for sale. Some will potentially be made available to the church tent for auction with the proceeds going to the church repairs fund.

85.12 Winsford Village Green Trust;

a) To receive the finance report and agree to pay the amounts due: Payments were agreed for N.Edwards £130 for Village Green maintenance and The Play Inspection Company £186. Proposed CW, seconded BN, approved by all.

b) Village Green Maintenance: MH will discuss care of the War Memorial with Mr Edwards and CW will remove the old poppy wreaths. Work is planned for clearance in the river in September.

c) AOB

85.13 Correspondence and Emails received: A further request has been made for information from the archive.

85.14 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended: CW and JY attended the recent ENPA planning training. CW distributed booklets collected at the meeting to Councillors, and fed back that it had been a useful opportunity.

85.15 Any Other Business: None

85.16 Items for Next Agenda: The bridge over the Winn, NS&I deposit account, tables on the Village Green

85.17 Date of Next meeting – 29th September 2025 at 7.00 in Winsford Village Hall

There being no further business CW closed the meeting at 21.14.