

WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL
Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 10th April 2024

Cllr Bennett - Chair
Cllr Cawley
Cllr James
4 Members of the General Public

Cllr Ashton
Cllr Cockrem – Deputy Chair
Clerk: Kim Duller

Public Forum: No items raised.

24/1163

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Griffiths & Partridge.

24/1164

Declarations of Interest: i) Cllr Cawley, Allotments. ii) Cllr Bennett, Community Playground Committee. iii) Cllr Ashton, Councillor for Crewkerne Town Council, Hinton St George Parish Council and Somerset Council. Member, National Farmers Union and National Association for Shooting and Conservation. iv) Cllr Cockrem, Item 24/1169dl.

24/1165

To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes from the Parish Council Meeting, 13th March 2024. Clerk highlighted mistake item 24/1162m sentence one. It should read Annual Parish Meeting, not Annual Parish Council Meeting. Minutes amended and signed. **Resolved. All in Favour.**

24/1166

Matters Arising Not on Agenda: None

24/1167

Somerset Council, Councillors Report: Ward Councillors did not attend. No apologies received. A written report had been previously been received and circulated. There was nothing specific to West & Middle Chinnock.

24/1168

Planning:

a. Applications:

i) **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock:** The Clerk confirmed that apart from guidance from Wessex Water, which had previously been circulated to Members, there had been no further information or update received relating to the application. The Clerk raised concerns regarding who would be monitoring the implementation of the requirements stipulated by the Wessex Water and noted that as the planning team were very short staffed, she had concerns that similar issues with drainage, as had occurred on the Smiths Hill site, could happen again. **Action: PC to ensure Wessex Water stipulated conditions are included, if permission is granted.**

b. Determinations:

i) **Eastall Farm 24/00848/TCA:** To carry out tree works within a Conservation area. Devolved decision due to Officer delegated powers. PC only notified due to trees being in Conservation area.

ii) **Mechams 24/00847/TCA:** To carry out tree works within a Conservation area. Devolved decision due to Officer delegated powers. PC only notified due to trees being in Conservation area.

c. Planning Enforcement:

i) **Hollowell Hill: C/F. No further update.**

ii) **Smith's Hill:** Following further concerns by residents, the Clerk confirmed she has had correspondence and a follow up phone call with the Enforcement Officer. The Clerk confirmed that the Enforcement team are working closely with the owner of the site to ensure that the site meets the previous planning regulations and notices, with specific regard to the total reinstatement of the bank and landscaping. No further work on the site can be completed until this work is finished and signed off. The site is being closely monitored. Concerns were raised again by the PC and residents with regards to the lack of drainage on the site. The Clerk explained that both Cllr Patrick and the Enforcement Officer had said that no further amendments could be made to the existing planning application.

The Clerk advised that if the PC and residents did have further concerns, she would put these to the Enforcement Officer, however recommended that any concerns should be very specific in terms of engineering and flood evidence. **Action: PC and Residents to send evidence to the Clerk a.s.a.p. Also Clerk to ask the Enforcement Officer which plans are being reinstated as there is significant confusion as to what plans the contractors are implementing.**

24/1169

Finance:

- a. **HMRC Final Decision:** Final decision letter received from HMRC stating that the PC were not liable to pay any penalties dating back to 2021 which had incorrectly been applied, and confirming that the case was now closed.
- b. **To Pay Clerks Expenses Qtr. 4:** £108.00 for standard expenses and £401.28 for overtime and holiday pay during the 4th Qtr. (Overtime and holiday subject to PAYE). OT included planning, additional precept meetings and Bank Holiday Rec incident. **All in Favour. Resolved.**
- c. **Delegated Powers Payments and Previously Agreed Invoices:**
 - I. To note payment of salary to Clerk for March 2024 £380.77
 - II. To note HMRC PAYE payment for March 2024: £95.20
 - III. To note payment for £87.44 for drain rods as agreed at March PC meeting item 24/115.
- d. **To Pay Routine or Previously Agreed Invoices:**
 - I. **Removal of Tree and excavation works at the Rec:** Pete Cockrem Plant Hire £1,884.00 Inc VAT. **Proposed Cllr Bennett, seconded Cllr Aston. All in Favour. Resolved. Action: The Clerk was asked to obtain 3 quotes to consider tree works for the remainder of the tree, an assessment and/or to consider complete removal. Clerk to check if the Tree is in the Conservation area.**
 - II. **Hire of the Village Hall for Parish Council meetings: £172.50.** This figure included an extra session in June 2023. **All in Favour. Resolved.**
 - III. **To Pay SLL March Invoice for grass cutting:** Cllr Cawley was able to confirm the cut in early March at the Rec, but not the second one on 27th March 2024. He also confirmed the cuts at the Allotments. **Action: Clerk to speak to N. Cochran to confirm and SLL.**

24/1170

Allotments:

- a. **Update from Clerk in absence of Cllr Partridge:** The Clerk confirmed that all paperwork confirming the price increase in 2025/26 had been sent out, including an additional document which had been requested from Allotment holders demonstrating the cost neutral budget and evidence to support the increase. The 2024/25 tenancy agreements have also been sent out to Allotment holders.
- b. Cllr Partridge to confirm date of the next Allotment Inspection. **Action: Clerk to circulate date.**

24/1171

Matters arising from 13th March 2024 meeting:

- a. **Youth Shelter:** C/F
- b. **Core Policy Review:** C/F
- c. **Asset Register:** C/F
- d. **Dangerous Parking on Scotts Way next to school:** C/F
- e. **Community Play Area based at the school:** Significant email correspondence had taken place between the Chair, the school and Neil Cochran. All parties have not yet been able to have a meeting. An online meeting has been proposed for late April. The Chair confirmed he had sourced a keypad style lock, details of which the Clerk was asked to circulate to Members for approval. The Chair will be proposing the lock solution at the meeting. Cost for lock approx. £150.00 plus fitting. No further action could now take place without the agreement of all parties involved.

Action: Clerk to write a letter to the school confirming that the services of the caretaker will not be grant funded by the Parish Council grant from the point that the lock is installed.

- f. **Annual Parish Meeting:** Ideas were discussed to encourage community involvement and inclusion, however taking into account time constraints. Concerns were raised that it was difficult to engage with some of the local groups and organisations in the villages, however it was agreed that the PC should attempt to support a sense of community and celebrate what the villages have to offer residents. **Action: Cllr James to make a proposal in conjunction with the Clerk to design a community event ensuring statutory timings are met. Level of interest to be determined before the final decision to go ahead.**
- g. **Tender, Grass Cutting:** C/F
- h. **Payroll Review:** C/F

24/1171

Reports & Correspondence:

- a. **Somerset Council Financial Challenges: Cllr Ashton gave a report.** A lot of decisions still cannot be made until May 2024. There is concern that Somerset Council is still in considerable financial difficulty. The Clerk added that Parish Councils were incredibly frustrated by the lack of information, misinformation and lack of clarity and openness from the Council. It had been reported amongst Parish Councils that Ward Councillors were not attending PC meetings and were not being adequately briefed by the Council. Devolution of services is seemingly in disarray. Clerks are now referring all queries to Officers at the Council in order to attempt to get definitive answers. 370 Councillor workers have offered to take voluntary redundancy from a target of 1000.
- b. **Fallen Tree and Rec Closure: Discussed under item 24/1169d.** The Chair thanked residents for their support and understanding during the recent Rec closure, and also thanked the contractors, Parish Council Members and the Clerk for their support in being able to re-open the Rec within a week.
- c. **Devolution Update:** No Update.
- d. **Local Community Networks:** Cllr Ashton reported there had been a talk on Emergency Planning and also potentially additional funding for defibrillators at the recent LCN meeting. The Clerk explained that concern had been raised by local Clerks relating to the value of the LCNs and their achievements. Many local Clerks are unable to attend the meetings due to the timing and are keen to see some evidence-based reports of their impact as the cost per annum to run them is currently £300,000. There is considerable disparity between the input and influence the Town Councils are having and Parish Councils, which again has raised concerns amongst the Parish Councils.
- e. **Clerk Report: By Exception:** Highways will be inspecting Middle Chinnocks' roads in May, however the roads cannot be inspected, or any action taken whilst they are so wet and full of water. The weather has also had an impact on the Councils' ability to fill existing potholes, however a significant number have now been marked up. Thanks were passed to Gillian and Keith Dodge for clearing the drains around Smiths Hill, Hollowell Hill and Lower Street. The offer still stands for Keith to demonstrate to residents how to use the rods which have now been purchased. Cllr Ashton confirmed the drains by Bow Bridge are to be cleared by Highways.
- f. **Footpaths: update:** Nothing report. Cllr Cockrem will find out the new contact details for Footpaths Officer as the current Footpaths Officer has now left.
- g. **Tree Clearance Bow Bridge Area:** Cllr Ashton will be clearing trees on his land, once the water level has dropped.

24/1172

Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday 8th May 2024 Agenda.

- a. **Agenda items, including Members Reports:** To be forwarded to the Clerk before Friday 3rd May 2024.

Meeting closed 8.20pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 8th May 2024

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock