

# WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

## Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 8th February 2023

### Present:

Cllr Bennett - Chair

Cllr Cawley

Cllr Partridge

5 Members of the General Public

Cllr Cockrem

Cllr Griffiths

Clerk: Kim Duller

**Public Forum:** i) Burst pipe on the Allotments mended by Cllr Cawley. The Chair formally thanked Cllr Cawley for mending it. **Action: Cllr Cawley asked the Chair to consider purchasing a new tap.** ii) Ongoing build-up of refuse in the Youth Shelter, including beer cans. Roof not yet repaired and mini bonfires have been held inside. **Action: Cllrs Bennett, Partridge and Cawley to visit the site and clean it. Future formal agenda item to consider recommendations going forward.**

23/1017

**Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Coleman.

23/1018

**Declarations of Interest:** i) Cllr Cawley Allotments. ii) Cllr Coleman, footpaths on Broadstone Farm land iii) Cllr Bennett, Community Playground Committee.

23/1019

**To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes of the Parish Council 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

**Cllr Griffiths gave the following amendments: (Changed by hand on signed December Minutes.) Resolved. All in Favour with following amendments:**

- a. **Allotments, Para D should read:** One resident interested, another from outside of the Parish.
- b. **Matters Arising from 14.12.2022 should read:** Replacement Swing: Clerk has ordered and been advised that delivery will be in January 2023.
- c. **Reports & Correspondence should read:** i) Gigaclear Para should read - "under the Public Forum minuted above" ii) Vandalism Para - "Norton Sub Hamdon..."
- d. **Allotments Para d:** Cllr Partridge asked that item 22/923 d be changed to Cllr Cawley strimmed the 2 vacant plots.
- e. **Finance:** The internal Auditor pointed out that the Clerks expenses were recorded as £110.89 in qtr 3 and £110.49 in the Minutes. £110.89 is the correct figure.

23/1020

**Matters Arising, Not on the Agenda:** i) The Clerk explained she was beginning to receive information on the upcoming Coronation, however reminded Members that no budget had been set aside support any events. Members discussed this and agreed that as other events had been planned for the village including a Street Party organised by the Muddled Man, that there was no need for input from the Parish Council, unless approached. ii) The Clerk confirmed that she had spoken to Highways and that they are not responsible for providing Salt bins. **Action: Clerk to get price.** All agreed that salt bin is required in the Smiths Hill/Hollowell Hill area due to the constant water runoff of water. The Clerk was given delegated powers to purchase a bin for Lower Street. **A budget of £300.00 was proposed by Tony, seconded Carl. All in Favour.** Location to be discussed further.

23/1021

**SCC/SSDC Councillors Report:** Newsletter received and circulated to Members. Cllr Hewitson had sent apologies, on the basis that there were no outstanding issues relating to W&MC, however the Clerk had requested a further update on location of signs.

**Planning:**

- a. **Applications:** It was discussed that due to 4 applications having been received in a short period of time, 3 of them, just within a week of the PC meeting, that there would not be enough time to give due diligence to the application. It was agreed that a separate planning meeting be held and Members of the public invited. **Action: Clerk to organise.**
- i. **Smiths Hill, 22/03095/S73A:** Various amendments to conditions and revised planning for a garage.
  - ii. **Quarry Cottage, West Chinnock, 23/00148/HOU:** External changes and creation of Ancillary Accommodation.
- b. **Applications Since time of the Agenda**
- i. **Eastall Farm, 23/00208/HOU:** Replacement windows, the addition of 3 new window openings, and the addition of a storm porch.
  - ii. **Eastall Farm, 23/00260/HOU:** Demolition of a conservatory to the bungalow annex and replaced with a single story pool room. New thermally efficient windows and external door, reinstatement of rear door which is currently a window. Conservation style roof lights to roof. Decked area to garden leading from pool room.
  - iii. **8, Hill View Close, West Chinnock 23/00249/HOU:** Demolition of existing rear conservatory and erection of single story extension.
- c. **Determinations since time of agenda: None**
- d. **Planning enforcement: Hollowell Hill.** No Update. **Action: Clerk to attempt to resolve outstanding queries directly with the Enforcement Officer.**
- e. **Planning queries:** i) **Fortunes Well:** The current agents had contacted the Chair and Clerk to find out what original discussions had taken place with the family member now responsible for the land. The Chair confirmed that his original conversation was based on 7 or 8 affordable 2 bedroom homes which could attract families to the village. This was significantly less than what the original agent was attempting to build on the site, which was 16 houses.

**Finance:**

- a. **To Ratify 23/24 Precept and Budget:** The Clerk explained that the Business budget planning meeting had been held on 14th December 2022. At this meeting it was agreed that there was not only a lot of uncertainty in the National economy, but a complete lack of information on the impact of the new Unitary structure at Somerset County Council on the budgeting process for Parish Councils. Due to the lack of guidance for Parish Councils, Members asked the Clerk to take advice from both local politicians, Senior Managers at SSDC, the SALC Chairman and various other sources. The Clerk was also asked to consider how other parishes were going to set their budget as well as to take into consideration how the new Local Community Networks (LCN's) would operate and if they would have any financial responsibility for budgets in their geographical area. The cause of the major uncertainty was that the new Unitary structure had not yet indicated what "costs" Parish Councils will have to take on board, and whether these will be funded or not. The general consensus from everyone that the Clerk had spoken to was to create a budget in line with inflation, at 10%. Currently items which are "rumoured" for the Parish Council's to start funding include pot holes, drain cleaning, hedge cutting, salt, emptying of dog bins, cutting of village verges. The budget had been resolved by Members via an online vote on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023 with a final decision to raise the Precept by 10%, from £15,000 to £16,500 and accept the budget proposals. This Resolution was Ratified at the meeting, with 5 Members being in favour and one against. (Cllr Cockrem, who voted against the final rise, stated she had still been in favour of a rise to £16,000 under the current situation).

The new SCC Unitary governance is set to start in April 2023, and the Parish Council hopes to have a clear steer in 24/25 as it has proved incredibly difficult to budget for “any item” which was traditionally funded by SSDC or SCC. The Clerk explained the whole process had been incredibly time consuming, however was confident, that the Parish Council had produced the best due diligent budget it could under extremely difficult circumstances.

- b. **To Approve Qtr. 3 Accounts:** Inspected and recommended for approval by internal auditor Neil Cochran. **Resolved. All in Favour.** The Internal Auditor recommended that some of the larger items which are currently put under miscellaneous should be shown under specified cost codes.
  - c. **To Approve Interim Clerks Expenses Qtr. 3. £290.67** It was noted that the majority of expenses related to additional purchases relating to the survey, events, breakfast, ink, hall heating, production of paper copy surveys, leaflets, posters etc. **Resolved to pay. All in Favour.**
  - d. **Delegated Powers Payments**
    - i) **Rock Salt £199.00** This was an emergency purchase based on shortage of salt after the very cold spell and uncertainty regarding whether the salt bins were going to be filled up again. An on line vote had been taken by Members who had all agreed to the purchase. A pallet of salt was purchased and distributed for use at “High Risk” areas in the villages. **Resolved. All in Favour.**
    - ii) **Deposit for the New Play Area, Recreation Ground, £6771.91.** The Chair explained that the Parish Council had negotiated a significant discount for the play equipment. Part of this agreement was upfront payment of the deposit. As this payment fell in the month of January 2023 when there was no PC meeting, the Chair said he was satisfied that all Members had previously agreed to make the payment and agreed for the deposit to be paid under delegated powers. Neil Cochran, internal auditor explained that he was satisfied that there was a paper trail relating to the overall payment, but couldn’t find a specific Minute relating to the deposit. Members agreed that they had made a decision to commit to the grant application, of £10k grant funding and £12K Warman ring fenced monies to spend on the creation of a play area on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023. The decision to appoint Sovereign as the main contractor and to accept the final quote of £22,573.01, ex VAT, (after 3 quotes had been received and presented to SSDC as part of the grant funding application) was taken on 21.12.22, with all Members being in favour. The vote to pay £6771.91 was taken again and **Resolved, All in Favour.** This decision was ratified. The Clerk pointed out that the original figure from Sovereign discussed at the October 22 meeting was higher than the final figure which has now been agreed. The Clerk explained that there have been issues with security and the cost may have be increased.
  - e. **To Pay any Routine or Previously Agreed Invoices:**
    - i) **Replacement Swing at the Recreation Ground £171.00 including VAT.** It was noted by Councillor Cawley that the costs had risen significantly. **Action: Clerk to report back at next meeting. Resolved All in Favour.**
- Allotments – Cllr Partridge**
- a. **Reserved Plots:** Awaiting feedback regarding Tenancy queries. One further plot vacant.
  - b. **Leak fixed, as previously reported during the Public Forum.**

**Matters arising from the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 meeting:**

- a. **Speed Signage:** Further discussion took place in reference to a FB post. **Action: The Clerk was asked to refer back to Cllr Patrick.**
- b. **Dangerous Parking at the School: Standing advice.** Issues with parking at the school should be referred to the Head Teacher. **Action: Cllr Coleman to continue liaising with the Head.**
- c. **Replacement Swing:** Cllr Cawley has now fitted the new swing.
- d. **Gigaclear:** Works at Highfield have been completed and were considered by Members of the Public to be good. However Members of the public raised concerns that no-one had from Gigaclear had responded to the concerns previously raised about the quality of the works and the schedule was not being followed, this was despite reassurances at the recent public meeting. There had also been further concerns raised on the Community Facebook Page. It was also noted that Gigaclear had not made contact with Middle Chinnock residents, so it was queried whether Gigaclear were planning to put fibre cable in Middle Chinnock. It was also noted that Wessex Internet was seen laying cable the Chinnock side of Odcombe. **Action: The Clerk was asked to feedback to Gigaclear and find out further information relating to whether either Gigaclear or Wessex are planning to put fibre cable in Middle Chinnock.**

**Reports & Correspondence:**

- a. **PC Community Grants Decision:**
  - i) **Norton Sub Hamdon Community Shop and Post Office:** A discussion had been held and all Members decided that **they would not be able to support a grant application for the shop** from the Precept Community fund, based on the grant only being for the benefit of a small number of residents. **Proposed Cllr Cockrem, seconded by Cllr Partridge. All in Favour.** A second request had been made to provide a grant on an annual basis to the shop. Member's decided they could not agree to this on the same basis as the initial request for a one off grant and the uncertainty of budget responsibility under Unitary Governance. **Proposed Cllr Griffiths, seconded Cllr Cawley. All in Favour.**
  - ii) **Grant West Chinnock CofE Primary School, Reinvigorating and revamping the Early Years Environment:** Members discussed the grant, however the application could not be accepted as the grant had come direct from the school The Clerk has informed the Head that the grant would need to be resubmitted via the PFA as the Parish Council cannot give a grant directly to the school. **Action: The Clerk was asked to contact the Head again to see if the PFA would submit the grant on behalf of the school. (Timescale by the end of February 2023). Proposed Cllr Cawley, Seconded Cllr Partridge, All in Favour.**
- b. **Community Play Area School, request to pay £519.45 towards Caretakers Costs:** Members were all in favour of continuing support and it was noted that the school contributes 1/3 of the opening and closing costs and the Parish Council contributes 2/3's. (Representing the outside of school hours cost). **Proposed Cllr Cockrem, Seconded Cllr Griffiths, All in Favour.** The Clerk explained that the Playground Committee needs to submit an invoice and the money cannot be paid directly to the school. **Action: Clerk to advise the Playground Committee.**
- c. **Village Hall Letting Fees Increase: Previously circulated for information. £15.00 per session. Heating costs had also risen.**
- d. **Scott's Way, Road Works:** These have been cancelled due to the "potential" of spawning Salmon. **Action: Clerk to find out when the works may start as Cllr Cockrem advised spawning season stopped at the end of February.** The Clerk confirmed it was the Environment Agency who had stopped the works, not SCC Highways.

**e. Recreation Ground: For Information**

- i) **Consultation Events update:** 129 on-line surveys had been received and 47 paper surveys. There are still some more to be collected from the school. The raw data is being analysed during February/early March.
- ii) **Gathering Existing User Data:** The Clerk has contacted existing users and is waiting for feedback. This data will be presented alongside the main survey.
- iii) **Children's Play Equipment Installation update:** Waiting to confirm a date. The only outstanding issues are the security. The aim is still to install before Easter. Installation will take a week.
- iv) **Next Steps:** Confirm exact dates of installation and publicise. (Signage will be required at the Recreation Ground). Contact Pavilion for access to water. Agree dates for feedback of survey, either end of March or after Easter, with events similar to before. Clerk queried if the spoil could be used on or off site. **Action: Chair to advise.**

**f. Local Community Networks:** Cllr Griffiths reported as follows: West & Middle Chinnock have been confirmed as part of Crewkerne LCN. LCN meetings will not start until late summer. The Crewkerne LCN is relatively large, and will consist of at least 20 other Parish Councils of varying sizes, each with a single nominated Member for each PC. The Police are very keen to become involved. It was also reported that the new planning framework for the Unitary Authority will take at least 4 years to put in place and as a cost saving exercise, neighbours will not be contacted or consulted as part of the planning process.

**g. Clerk Report:** The Clerk reported the state of the Roads in Middle Chinnock in particular the Poop Hill area. This was reported at the end of January and then inspected by Highways within 48 hours. The Clerk is waiting for further information and feedback.

**h. Footpaths: Standing item, reports made as and when.**

**i. Parish Council Vacancy: Clerk to publicise.**

**j. Drains, Potholes and Hedges:** There are a number of potholes which have been marked up, however the Clerk has not received any further reports. No drain blockages to report, however the drains on Lower Street are going to be inspected by Highways as the runoff from the Smiths Hill site has caused "grooves" in the Road.

**k. Environment Champions Network, Somerset: Nothing to Report**

**Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- a. Cllr Cockrem sent apologies for the next meeting.

Any Agenda items to be forwarded to the Clerk before 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

**Meeting closed 8.45pm**

**Next Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Parish Council Meeting 7.30pm  
Village Hall, West Chinnock**

**23/1027**

