

WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held Wednesday March 4th 2020

Cllr Bennett - Chair
Cllr Coleman – Vice Chair
Cllr Griffiths

Cllr Patrick
Cllr Cawley

Clerk: Kim Duller

**6 Members of the General Public
SCC Cllr Keating**

Public Forum: The Chair confirmed that the meeting would be recorded. It was reported between the Triangle at the junction of Lower Street and Smiths Hill there are 2 drains. Between the 2 drains there are blockages and during the recent heavy rain, have overflowed. Keith and Gill Dodge have rodded the drains but they are still blocked and requested jetting. It was confirmed that all of the drains along the Haunts are full and also need jetting. Cllr Keating suggested the Clerk contact Lee Norman and Chris Holley, under gully emptying at County Roads and they should be able to action. Kim to come back to Cllr Keating if any issues. It was discussed that this work would not come in line with the “normal” 2- 3 year schedule of works, however as it was classed as an emergency, remedial works should take place. Cllr Keating confirmed that it could be £15.00 per gully to clear, outside of the normal rotation. Cllr Keating confirmed this was for jetting only, but if there was a more significant problem with the drains that this would be SCC responsibility. The Clerk confirmed that the County team had been very helpful with a number of Highways issues over the past 18 months.

20/664 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Tinkley. Members wished him a speedy recovery from his illness.

20/665 **Declarations of Interest:** Cllr Tony Cawley, Allotments and Yarlinton Land. Clerk and Cllrs Bennett and Coleman, Recreation Ground Development Committee. The Clerk, legal transfer of the Recreation Ground. Cllr Patrick standing as SSDC Councillor at next local election.

20/666 **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5th February 2020: Minutes agreed as being a true record of the meeting & signed by the Chair.**

20/667 **County Councillors Report:** i) Cllr Keating confirmed that the grant the Clerk had applied for, (for a community breakfast), had been successful and the PC had been awarded £250.00. Cllr Keating confirmed that further SSC community grants would be available in September 2020 and asked that all local community groups be encouraged to apply. ii) Further to information already sent out by Cllr Keating regarding the Corona virus, which was published on the community website, Cllr Keating advised that the situation was changing daily and it was best practice for residents to keep checking the government advice link. Cllr Keating stressed the emphasis is protection of the most vulnerable in our communities. iii) Confirmation from Cllr Keating that works on the A356 will be starting in the next few weeks.

20/668 **Item 10.L bought forward from Reports and Correspondence**

Hedges & Verges: Discussion on who has responsibility for hedges and verges. It was confirmed by Cllr Patrick that SCC owns hedge to hedge and the verges and the hedges are the responsibility of the private land owners. Cllr Keating clarified that the owner of the land owns the land, but SCC has surface rights to the public right of way and SCC's responsibility is to make sure there is access at all times, in particular in respect to footpaths. Anything which grows outwards from the side is the responsibility of the landowner to the middle of the road. Any cleaning of the road, and rubbish on the road is the responsibility of SSDC. This still left indecision as to who was going to co-ordinate the cutting of the hedges in terms of health & safety responsibility and to keep the roads clear in terms of pedestrians,

horse riders, visibility for motor vehicles when it was nesting season, as the law still requires the roads to be kept clear during this period. Cllr Bennett confirmed that up to 2019 the farmers had undertaken the hedge and verge cutting, however after a confrontational incident last year involving a member of the public; it was unlikely that farmers would be willing to cut this year. Cllr Patrick stated that it was unfair to put pressure on farmers to help cut the hedges, however conceded it was the land owner's responsibility to cut hedges and SCC to cut verges. Cllr Bennett confirmed that the PC did not have a budget for this. Cllr Patrick explained that this should not be a PC burden however re-stated that it was not the PC responsibility. Cllr Keating confirmed that SCC only do one verge cut a year in August which would not meet the legal requirements relating to health & safety and another is needed in May. Cllr Keating mentioned he uses John French in Haselbury Plucknett and it normally takes him half a day. Again Cllr Bennett re-iterated that technically the PC should not be paying for the hedges to be cut. Cllr Keating suggested that the payment for hedges was a good use of the precept; however Cllr Bennett reiterated that the PC had not had to pay previously. Whilst it was agreed therefore that landowners and SCC were responsible for hedges and Cllr Bennett suggested the PC talk to the local farmers again. It was recommended that the Clerk investigate the costs of cutting with John French. If costs are involved in cutting hedges and verges, the budget would have to be re-forecast as there was no money in the budget put aside. Cllr Bennett suggested putting together a map of the key visibility splays which caused problems which the PC could get a quote on. Clerk to get quotes on hourly rates and time to cut the recommended areas. **All to Members to map out suggested cutting areas and send to the Clerk.**

20/669
20/670

District Councillors Report: No SSDC Councillor until after forthcoming elections.

a. Planning Applications: None had been received at the time of agenda. The Clerk queried with Cllr Patrick if all applications were now being just listed on the portal rather than any being sent as a hard copy. Steve Ashton confirmed that Merriott still get paper copies. Clerk to follow up to see if at the very minimum, the PC should receive notification via email of any planning applications.

b. Applications Since Time of the Agenda: None

c. Determinations Since Time of the Agenda: None

d. Applegarth: Clerk confirmed the query had been actioned. **Awaiting further information from SSDC.**

20/671

Finance:

a. Somerset Landscapes Query Historic Invoices: Clerk waiting for a summary of the invoices to be paid. £271.80 will be paid for the April invoice immediately, with up to £500.00 being paid for the remaining invoices. **Any further queries to be brought back to the April meeting.**

b. Grass Cutting Contract: The Clerk confirmed that she had spoken to the CEO at SLL and prices would be held for a further year. A member of the public asked if it was possible to add cutting by hand with a scythe the next time the contract goes out to tender. He also confirmed that he would be offering scythe services locally. The Clerk agreed to put details of the scythe service on to the website if the details are forwarded to her. Cllr Bennett explained that if the resident wished to tender for the contract next year, he would need to have all of the correct insurance in place and there would still be the requirement for some lawn mowing for the cricket pitches and recreation ground.

c. Nat West Bank Update: Cllr Bennett and Coleman are now signatories. The Clerk confirmed she had received a hamper in the form of compensation.

d. Play Inspection Company Invoice for Recreation Ground Risk Assessment: It was resolved to pay the play inspection company £102.00 for the risk assessment. Cllr Bennett explained that the report was very thorough and well worth the money. The next stage would be to contact the Recreation Committee to advise on the findings of the report and to also discuss implications at the Rec development committee. Cllr Bennett confirmed that he and Cllr Cawley would go through the report and identify

who is responsible next to each item. Once this is done, Cllr Bennett to advise on next steps. Cllr Bennett to also speak to Mr Warry regarding the potential of a gate stile next to the cricket nets to access the field for walkers. Cllr Cawley requested the small footbridge entering the Rec be reported to SSDC again as it is part of the footpath. Cllr Bennett and Cllr Cawley to advise once an inspection has taken place.

- e. **To Pay any Routine or Previously Agreed Invoices: None.** The Clerk confirmed that £250.00 had been paid into the bank account from SCC for the grant towards the community breakfast.

20/672

Allotments:

- a. **Update:** Plot rectification. Mr Vout confirmed some tidying was taking place. The Clerk confirmed she had had a positive response from some allotment holders to say they are actively and enthusiastically working on the plots. Cllr Bennett confirmed that some Members will aim to visit the site the weekend before the 31st March 2020 and also explained that Members would understand that there wasn't necessarily growing taking place, but that the plots were neat and tidy, sheds were the correct size and that there was no equipment or items which did not comply with the tenancy agreement. Mr Vout queried whether there was any feedback on plots 9 & 10. The Clerk confirmed she had not had any communication.
- b. **Rent & Tenancy Agreements:** Clerk has issued requesting payment by 31st March 2020 and the process was very positive.
- c. **Rent Review 2021/22:** Carried forward. To be postponed until the April or May meeting.
- d. **Allotment Hedge:** Carried Forward. Has been cut by Raymond Bailey. **Clerk waiting for invoice.**

19/673

Matters arising from the March 2020 Meeting:

- a. **Purchase of the Recreation Ground:** Initial delay caused by not being able to write a cheque for disbursements upfront, however the main delay has been a query over the ownership of the bridge over the stream which Cllr Griffiths had raised, and access. It is thought that SSDC does not own the access, neither is it publically adopted, however this query, other searches and the contracts are now being managed by Battens. It was suggested by Cllr Griffiths that there could possibly be prescriptive rights and by putting a statutory declaration in place the situation would be solved. Mr Vout commented that perhaps SSDC had records of ownership of the bridge due to the fact that they undertook the building and remedial works previously, however Members felt the prescriptive rights route was initially a more positive and simpler route to take. **It was agreed to pay Battens £750.00 towards costs from the £3,500.00 budget. Clerk to keep Members updated. Proposed by Cllr Griffiths, all in favour.**
- b. **Pot Holes Self-Maintenance:** Carried forward to next meeting.
- c. **Grill Over Well, Higher Street:** Cllr Bennett has inspected the grill cover again and it is still firm. A 3D drawing of the cover of the well has been completed which has the wording "Great Well" on it. Cllr Bennett to circulate plans to Members.
- d. **Riverbank Collapse, Bow Bridge:** Cllr Bennett reported this would remain a standing item until SCC has started to undertake works or further decisions are made on the safety of the Road.
- e. **Fires on the Recreation Ground:** Mr Cochran kindly agreed to speak to the Chair of the Recreation Ground Committee.
- f. **Waste Bin Middle Chinnock:** The SCC License has been reapplied for and the Clerk is waiting for confirmation. Members voted on signage for the front of the bin from 2 options A or B. It was resolved to accept option B which was the preferred option of by Middle Chinnock residents. Clerk to offer PC assistance with the putting up of the bin. Once bin is in situ Clerk to let SSDC know for adding back to emptying schedule. **Clerk to liaise with Mr Goddard.**
- g. **BT Phone Box Update:** Cllr Patrick confirmed that application planning advice was available and requested permission from the PC to continue with this. It was resolved by

all Members that Cllr Patrick had the authority to lead on the change of use plans. Cllr Patrick will bring plans back to the April meeting. It was confirmed it was a listed building and also would involve change of use. All were optimistic that the plans would be a positive change and should go through smoothly. The plans will include i) Notice board with a map of the area including local walks ii) Fruit and veg stall to swap home grown produce. Two volunteers have come forward to help with painting and sanding. It was confirmed that there will be an electricity supply which will be paid for by BT – enough to power a 20 watt light bulb.

- h. Casual Vacancy Parish Council:** There has now been 2 applications for co-option. The first candidate unfortunately would have had difficulty attending all meetings and supporting the PC for other responsibilities in between meetings as he worked abroad. A second candidate, Jonathon Naughton had come forward and his CV was discussed at length. Whilst the main concern was that Mr Naughton worked in London, he had confirmed that he would be able to attend every meeting and would be spending a greater amount of time living “full-time” in the village in the future and therefore would be able to contribute to additional responsibilities expected of a Parish Councillor. Mr Naughton’s experience in land management was felt to be a particular plus, but that he may find some of the bureaucracy relating to local government frustrating at times. All were in favour of the co-option of Mr Naughton. **It was resolved that the Clerk would contact him to confirm whether he would be available to start in September, after the summer recess. (Formal co-option would take place at the September 2nd 2020 PC meeting).**
- i. Casual Vacancy Parrett Ward Election:** The Clerk confirmed elections were taking place on Thursday 12th March 2020.
- j. Email Set Up and IT Review:** The Clerk confirmed that not all emails have been set up by Members, however reported that this was currently not a problem as the Clerk had not been able to get the Gmail account linked into her Outlook management of email correspondence and without this it was impossible to manage the level of email traffic, filing and the prioritisation of emails working on 2 separate Parish accounts. It was resolved that the PC would be willing to pay up to £50.00 to support some IT advice for the Clerk as she was nervous about running 2007 which is currently unsupported and this raised potential GDPR issues. **Clerk to keep all Members updated.**
- k. VE Day 75th Anniversary:** The Clerk confirmed that there may be a number of “local” small events happening around VE day embracing the whole community being organised by local groups and organisations and possibly the Muddled Man. The Clerk confirmed she would attempt to pull a programme together of all of the events and create publicity around them over perhaps a whole month, either side of the actual VE Day 75th Anniversary and with the support from Members of the PC, promote via a number of communication channels, including a leaflet, social media, posters etc.
- l. Police Visit to Parish Council:** Carried forward as Ben Middleditch was unable to make the proposed dates. **Clerk to continue to liaise to set a date.**
- m. Neighbourhood Plan Seminar: Carried Forward:** Cllr Tinkley was considering attending, however probably will be unable to due to illness. **Feedback at next meeting.**
- n. Yarlington Land Purchase:** Discussions are still taking place within Yarlington at Committee Level. The Clerk is having regular contact, however Yarlington have confirmed they have not yet made any decisions relating to the PC’s request to purchase the land.
- o. Recreation Ground Development:** Mr Cochran confirmed the Committee has recently met. Currently some sketched out schemes and ideas are being produced to include various costed out options. Ultimately whatever the Committee proposes, the final decision for the proposal will come back to the PC as they should in theory, be the owners of the Rec by then and they will need to make the final approval and also an agreement of how the area will be managed and who will take responsibility. In terms of

funding, there are a number of grant opportunities from external organisations as well as SSDC. There may also be some planning gain if any further development takes place in the village which may be used for community development.

19/674

Reports & Correspondence:

- a. **Highways and Drains Standing Item:** Cllr Bennett confirmed that he and Cllr Cawley had carried out regular reporting to SCC and there had been a number of actions taking this month including at Duckpool Lane and Little Silver. Mr Vout reported an issue at Mecham's Corner which was noted by Cllr Cawley.
- b. **Community Website Update:** After discussion it was resolved by all that the Website was still important and gave good value as a basic tool for communication and point of reference for some the village, both to residents and anyone else who may be interested in finding out information on the village. The Clerk confirmed she had been contacted by the Village Hall Committee to see if there was any discussion to be had around extending the functionality of the website to include Hall bookings etc and on line systems. Previously the PC had said they were satisfied with the current basis of the website. It was agreed that any groups or organisations who needed to put information on to the website could either on their own if they were taught to do it, or simply, via a person and that if a company was employed to do this, they would still need the input from village organisations. It was agreed that the Clerk should go back to the Village Hall and ask for further information for their ideas/proposals on the type of website that they are investigating. It was agreed by all, that it wasn't necessarily the content which was an issue, it was the management of the website. Steve Ashton explained that he had had a similar situation in Merriot where they had wanted to set up a community website and had the same issue in that they were happy to set it up but didn't want to manage it on a day to day basis. They currently use word press, which is similar to Weebly, with a number of plug ins. They have faced the same difficulties as our Parish, and the Clerk reported that this was a common theme across other Parishes. Mr Ashton recommended that in his experience you don't need a third party. **In the meantime, the Clerk to continue putting on information, help train self sufficiency for local organisations and liaise with the Village Hall Committee regarding future ideas and proposals.**
- c. **Corona Virus:** The Clerk confirmed she had kept Members up to date with Government guidance and the website link changes every day, normally at around 4pm. The Clerk has also put details on the Website. Concerns were raised about groups in the village who are most vulnerable; however there was currently no guidance on this. **Clerk to continue to keep everyone updated, in particular of any major changes.**
- d. **Request for Development Sites:** Cllr Patrick reported that SSDC do not have a plan for the 5 year land supply, so in theory sites could pop up "anywhere". SSDC are therefore asking landowners to submit sites for consideration for planning. This is a new priority which has only just been rolled out, therefore land owners who have previously been turned down may be encouraged to re-apply.
- e. **Rural Strategy Road show:** Clerk previously circulated for information. It was agreed that no-one would be able to attend however discussed the importance for the Members to stay up to date with rural priorities and concerns, lobbying and policy issues for the benefit of the villages. (Including the importance internet access for rural businesses).
- f. **Tree Warden – Proposal for a Committee rather than a Single Appointed Person:** Cllr Patrick confirmed that 4 people were interested and very keen to help, including a tree surgeon. He felt that rather have just one person, it would be more effective to pool knowledge and expertise and form a small committee. This background to this is that the PC's Tree Policy says that the PC needs to consult someone knowledgeable before the PC can plant 3 or more trees. If a committee is in place they could act in an advisory committee. Cllr Patrick suggested that this is not a reporting committee, but should be

an advisory committee in order that they can be consulted by the PC. They will advise on location, soil suitability and be a pool of knowledge. **It was proposed by Cllr Patrick that it should be an advisory group and not a committee, seconded by Cllr Coleman. Unanimous. Cllr Patrick was asked to suggest a process of how the advisory group would work and agreed to put together a terms of reference, to be circulated before the next PC meeting.**

- g. Felled Tree Conservation Area:** Cllr Patrick reported there was a tree which had been taken down on Parish land which the SSDC Tree Officer had decided not to follow up as it was not in the public interest.
- h. SSDC Tree Giveaway:** Cllr Patrick updated the PC. The PC had been given 50 trees, 10 had to go back as the PC Tree Policy states that we will only plant UK native trees. The school were not interested in having any trees planted on their land at this point in time, but perhaps in the future. They may have been interested in giving them to students, but no further contact has been made. The advice is to put them in the ground before mid March at the latest otherwise they risk infection and disease. Cllr Patrick therefore suggested plan B which was put together to address getting the trees planted if no residents etc came forward. So far Cllr Coleman had agreed to plant 10 trees, Cllr Griffiths 10 trees, The Clerk a number tbc, 10 to Cllr Bennett or more if need be. Possibly some to farmers, subject to the suitability for cattle. Cllr Patrick explained that plan B wasn't ideal as all of the trees had been given to Parish Councillors, but hopes in future for more residents to become involved with longer timescales in place. The Clerk explained that she would ask Members to update their register of interests as the trees had come from SSDC. It was suggested that there may be the possibility to plant some trees at the Rec which would reduce moisture levels. Cllr Bennett explained this may be a good idea, however was subject to any agreement of future developments on the Rec and ownership. Cllr Patrick confirmed there were plans by SSDC to do a tree give away annually and would start thinking ahead now. Cllr Patrick will start distributing the existing trees straight away. Cllr Patrick confirmed that he has written to local farmers and has had a positive response from the Honeybuns regarding tagging trees in their internal hedges and happy to plant trees along the footpath on the top field between West & Middle Chinnock and had provided Cllr Patrick with a map. As Honeybuns were tenants, that he should also seek permission of the land owner. Clerk to provide details for Mr Gibbs.
- i. Parish Council Authority over Parish Land:** Cllr Patrick explained that as a result of carrying out a Parish Land survey as part of the tree giveaway that he felt there was land that we could plant further trees on and this should be a regular item. Cllr Bennett felt it was a good point, but that this was a discussion for future meetings, but not currently. Cllr Patrick queried the land called Greatfields". Cllr Bennett confirmed that trees cannot be placed on this land as it is currently part of a farm tenancy and rent is paid on an annual basis. However this land would be looked in to as part of any land management plan in the future.

i. a) Non Agenda Item: Cllr Patrick requested to propose taking on management of the allotment hedge and the laying it: He explained there were a number of people in the village interested in laying hedges and fostering local rural skills and they wanted to see if the PC would be interested in planning to lay a section of hedge. Cllr Bennett explained there were a number of pros and cons and these need to be fully considered, in particular security from the visual openness whilst the hedge is growing, but in theory thought this could be positive. Cllr Bennett requested Cllr Patrick provide more details which the PC would be able to discuss concerning how it could be laid; they most suitable type of hedge for laying, timescales etc. **Cllr Patrick to bring back a detailed proposal back to the meeting.** For information, Mr Vout mentioned that on plot 20 on the allotments, he thought that the hedges had been laid.
- j. New Traffic Management System: Previously circulated by the Clerk for information.**

Matters for the 1st April 2020 Meeting:

- a. Cllr Bennett confirmed that he would not be able to attend the April PC meeting. Cllr Coleman agreed to stand in as Chair on Cllr Bennett's behalf.
- b. Cllr Bennett reminded Members that items cannot be discussed at a PC meeting unless they were put on the agenda before it is published. Any proposal which requires agreement or a vote must have supporting papers for circulation before the PC meeting.

Next Meeting Wednesday 1st April 2020

7.30pm in the Village Hall

Meeting closed 9.10pm