

WEST & MIDDLE CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 8th November 2023

Cllr Bennett - Chair

Cllr Griffiths

6 Members of the General Public

Cllr Cawley

Clerk: Kim Duller

Public Forum: No questions.

23/1118 **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Partridge (WR), Cllr Cockrem (Delayed due to traffic).

23/1119 **Declarations of Interest:** i) Cllr Cawley, Allotments. ii) Cllr Bennett, Community Playground Committee.

23/1120 **To Approve and Sign as Correct the Minutes from the Parish Council Meeting, 11th October 2023.** Cllr Cawley advised that no agreement had been made regarding the purchase of steel chains at the Recreation Ground which was minuted at the last meeting. The Chair confirmed that the chains will be replaced like for like, however a gap should be left clear for emergency vehicles. The Clerk advised no steel chains have been purchased. **Previous Minutes Resolved. All in Favour.**

23/1121 **Matters Arising Not on Agenda:** An urgent email had been received by the Clerk at 4.38pm, (circulated to all Somerset Clerks) from Cllr Bill Revans, Leader of Somerset Council confirming proposals for Asset and Devolution as a result of the declared financial emergency. Somerset Council suggested Parish Councils may wish to take on services and a list was provided. **Action: Due to the short notice, Clerk to fact find the implications and gather information with other local Parishes and Somerset Council to enable Parish Councillors to be able to scrutinise the proposals, including the potential financial impact on residents. Clerk to circulate to information to Members for discussion before the Budget planning meeting for Precept setting 2024/24.** Current shortfall 2023 circa £30million, projected £100 million 2024. Potential for Section 114 bankruptcy notice. Steve Ashe, a local resident, gave an overview of the Section 114 notice, the calling in of commissioners from government and the background to what could happen next. This would include the commissioners attempting to set up a balanced budget. This would not necessarily mean services being stopped, especially not statutory services, however it is likely they would be identifying existing assets. Also discussed was the concern that receipts from Council tax will not cover Adult social care and children's services. SA concluded saying the Council will try as far as is possible to avoid the declaring the Section 114 notice. **The Chair thanked SA for his update.**

23/1122 **SCC/SSDC Councillors Report:** Previously circulated. No attendance from elected Councillors. Apologies given.

23/1123 **Planning:**

a. Applications:

- i) **Fortunes Well 22/00724/FUL, Higher Street, West Chinnock:** No further update on planning portal. Residents keen to find out what is happening. **Clerk to ask SC Cllr Patrick for update.**

b. Determinations: None

c. Planning Enforcement:

- i) **Hollowell Hill: C/F from last meeting, no further update.**
- ii) **Smith's Hill:** Further works commenced. **Action: Clerk to ask for update from SC Cllr Patrick.** The Clerk confirmed that there had been further land slippage on the site, which when the Parish Council previously raised this risk with the planners, the planners had refused to accept this was a concern.

Recent landslips including the collapse of the riverbank on Scotts Way in the West and Middle Chinnock and the surrounding area demonstrate strong evidence that there is an issue of regular land slippage in the area and the breakthrough of springs is now a regular occurrence on to local highways.

d. Planning Queries: None

23/1124

Finance:

- a. **To pay John Burton Signs, Recreation Ground Legislative signage, £90.00 + VAT previously agreed: Resolved. Action:** Location of signage agreed: a) Side of Pavilion facing entrance from Lower Street, b) Gate at entrance to the Recreation Ground car park. **Action: Cllr Cawley.**
- b. **To pay donation of £20.00 to the British Legion as part of Remembrance Day (Existing wreath used each year): Resolved.**
- c. **HMRC Update:** There have been issues regarding paying monthly HMRC payments due to issues with the Payroll IT system, therefore payments will revert back to quarterly payments.
- d. **To pay any routine invoices: None.**
 - i) **National Allotment Society £66.00. Resolved**
- e. **Delegated Powers & previously agreed invoices:**
 - i) **Clerk monthly salary October 2023: £354.44 net. Resolved**

23/1125

Allotments: No Report

23/1126

Matters arising from 11th October 2023 meeting:

- a. **Youth Shelter c/f Dec meeting**
- b. **Pot Holes Recreation Ground:** Additional scalplings are required to finish the existing works. Agreed a budget of £100.00. **Resolved Action: Cllr Bennett agreed to order from previous supplier, Andy Cockrem.**
- c. **Position of Salt Bin, Lower Street:** Agreed location, right hand side of gateway of the new Smiths Hill development: **Action: Cllrs Bennett and Cawley to carry out the groundwork's and install. Cllr Bennett to check existing stock of salt from previous year to put into the new salt bin.**
- d. **Recreation Ground Signage:** Location of new signage discussed under Finance item: 23/1124a.
- e. **Core Policies and Standing Orders Review: c/f 13.12.23**
- f. **Asset Register c/f 13.12.23**
- g. **West & Middle Chinnock Grants:** 3 expressions of interest. **Decision due 13th December 2023.**
- h. **Parish Council: Councillor Vacancies: On-going.**
- i. **Mobile Library Update:** Unfortunately, the timings which had previously been published by Somerset Council were incorrect. These have been updated by the Clerk and new posters created. Also publicised via social media and on the community website. **Action: Clerk to report back any decision on the future of the service.**

23/1127

Reports & Correspondence:

- a. **Local Community Networks:** SA reported on the latest meeting held at Henhayes and confirmed that the focus had been on Highways. Lee Norman attended representing Somerset Council Highways. The importance of escalating more serious incidents (not requiring the police), but for example a broken man hole cover etc had been discussed as well as publicising the new Somerset Council duty roster in order to deal with such incidents. Publication of roster TBA, which will include a dedicated telephone number. Contracts at Highways also being reviewed, including rationalisation. Boundary reviews starting on 14th November 2023 target figure of one Councillor per ward, thus reducing the number of Somerset Council, Councillors. (Currently 110).
- b. **Remembrance Service:** Cllr Griffiths attending.

- c. **Response to Storm Ciaran:** Initial reports made of landslip on Scotts Way at 6.30am by Cllr Bennett. Local farmer contacted; Tree down blocking Green lane 7.30am. Land ownership of the banks adjoins Scotts Way was discussed in order to ensure the PC is contacting the correct land owner. Also there has been a collapse on the river bank in two places on Scott's Way, which was reported immediately. Highways responded to this straight away and put out warning/safety barriers and cones. **Action: Clerk to liaise with Highways regarding advice on works to riverbank and implications for any Road closures.**
- d. **Reporting Floods:** The Environment Agency has asked Parish Councils to publicise the flood reporting portal in order to gather information on "flood hotspots". **Action Clerk to publicise.**
- e. **Village Flood Warden:** Discussed by the Parish Council and agreed that there was sufficient support from the Parish Council and local residents without having a "formal" Warden.
- f. **Community Review Project:** For Information, not the same as a neighbourhood plan. After discussion, agreed that the PC is not in a position to pursue this at the moment.
- g. **SALC AGM Notice 2nd December 2023:** For Information.
- h. **Clerk Report: Parish Council 12th October 2023 – 9th November 2023.**
 - i) **Signage:** A discussion was held regarding the PC purchasing signage for Road closures. It was confirmed that unfortunately the Parish Council does not have the authority to close Roads and it has to be arranged under license. **Action: The Clerk to ask Highways if the Parish could have some spare sign and cones to use in extreme circumstances, without license.**
 - ii) **Fly tipping Smokey Hole:** To Report.
 - iii) **Smiths Hill Water Run, Groove dug:** To Report.
 - iv) **Water Run from Hollowell Hill and Smiths Hill development Site:** Now constant. **Action: Clerk to discuss springs causing damage to the Highways with SC highways.**
- i. **Wessex Internet:** Planning Query Closed.
- j. **Footpaths Update:** None.
- k. **Solar Events:** For Information.
- l. **Drains, Potholes and Gullies:** All previously discussed. Cllr Bennett asked for thanks to be passed to Keith Dodge/Cllr Cawley for clearing the drains throughout the recent floods.
- m. **Unitary Update:** Previously discussed in the meeting.

23/1128

Correspondence & Matters for Wednesday 13th December 2023

- a. **Budget Meeting and Grant Meeting:** To take place before the December 13th Parish Council Meeting at 6.00p.m. (SC aiming for 5% increase in Council Tax, could be higher if Bankruptcy declared). It was discussed that setting a budget would be incredibly difficult due to the uncertainty of the future of Somerset Council). An increase in reserves was discussed. If the bankruptcy is announced then the commissioners who come in to inspect will have the ability to set Council Tax between 15 and 20%. The Parish Council expressed its concerns regarding the mis-management of the finances at Somerset Council which will now impact on not only West & Middle Chinnock, but all residents in Somerset.
- b. **Agenda items, including Members Reports:** To be forwarded to the Clerk before Thursday 7th December 2023.

Meeting closed 8.20pm

Next Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 13th December 2023

7.30pm, Village Hall, West Chinnock



Members of the Parish Council would like
to invite local residents to join them,
after the close of the
13th December meeting
for
Christmas Drinks & Nibbles.
Provided by Members and the Clerk