WEST HATCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the West Hatch Parish Council held in the Village Hall Wednesday 30th November 2022

**22/53 Attendance and apologies**

**Councillors: Read, Finlayson, Kerr, Knight, Middleton, and Walters**

**Public: 4 parishioners**

**Apologies: None**

A minute silence was held in respect of Cllr Nick Harrison-Sleap following his recent death.

**22/54 Declarations of Interest**

**There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the items to be discussed**

**22/55 Notice of Parish Council Vacancy**

**A vacancy has occurred on the Council following the death of Nick Harrison-Sleap. The clerk will post the formal notice of vacancy after the funeral, which is scheduled for 7th December. It is hoped to co-opt a new Councillor at the January meeting.**

**22/56 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council meeting held on 28th September 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

**22/57 Matters arising from the minutes**

* **Condition of Prey Lane Footpath T31/34 (22/44)**

There is an historic request from the Trail Riders Fellowship to re-establish Prey Lane as a byway open to all vehicles (BOAT). The path is currently a restricted byway, and The Bridleway Association is keen for the path to be reinstated to this level which would enable horse drawn vehicles to use it. However, in view of the condition of the byway and the difficulty and cost involved in making it accessible, it was agreed that a future meeting should consider whether the Parish Council should put in a request to modify the definitive map, particularly as there is a suitable footpath T31/4 which runs parallel to the byway.

* **Changes to website (22/46)**

The new look website is now operational, and the Council thanked Robert Wheatley for his work on this issue. It is hoped to switch to the new contract with LCN in the New Year.

**22/58 Parishioners Forum**

The new landlady of the Farmers Arms introduced herself to the Council. She is keen to become involved within the community and is willing to work with the Council and other organisations if a suitable project is identified that would help people in need within the area.

**22/59 To receive reports from County Councillor and District Councillor**

Unfortunately, the County Councillor/ District Councillor was not present, and no report had been submitted.

**22/60 A358 Update – To consider whether the Council should register as an interested party to the Development Consent Order**

It is anticipated that National Highways will be submitting their application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) by the end of the year and the Parish Council has the opportunity to register to be a party to the public examination process. The Community of Parishes will also be registering as an interested party.

It was agreed that the Parish Council should register as an interested party and submit any documents to the Planning Inspectorate that may be required.

The Transport Action Network has advised that the parishes should continue to lobby the County Council as it is a statutory consultee to the process, and it was agreed that the Council would also submit any relevant documents to the County Council.

**22/61 Local Government Reorganisation – Update**

The consultation regarding the make up of the Local Community Networks (LCN) has finished and the responses are being analysed. It is likely that the size of each LCN will be larger than the Parish Council would wish but that the small group of local parishes that have already met informally will work together within the LCN.

**22/62 To confirm salary increase of Clerk**

The new salary scales for Local Council Clerks have been published with effect from 1/04/2022. The Council agreed that the new salary should be implemented, resulting in an increase of £1 per hour, backdated to 01/01/2022.

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**22/63 Formal Expenditure Approval**

It was resolved to make the following payments:

1. Clerk’s Salary (inc arrears) £403.00
2. Clerk’s expenses £ 17.00

**22/64 To consider and review the Council’s banking arrangements**

Following the death of Cllr Harrison-Sleap, the Council needs to review its banking arrangements and the Clerk outlined the difficulties with the current provider, Santander.

Many Parish Councils bank with Unity Bank which has a good reputation within the sector and offer online banking, but at a cost of £6pm. It was agreed that this should be explored further, and that Cllrs Middleton and Finlayson would carry out some research to ensure that this is the best option. Cllrs Walters, Knight, and Kerr agreed to be the signatories on the new account.

**22/65 To nominate contacts for the Somerset Emergency Community Contact List**

It was agreed that Douglas Kerr would be the nominated contact for the Somerset Emergency Community Contacts database. He would be the first point of contact should there be an emergency in the area.

**22/66 Planning – to consider any planning matters arising**

There are apparently still some concerns regarding the development at Abbeywood, but these have not been formally brought to the Council’s attention. Cllr Knight will speak to the parishioners concerned to ascertain whether they wish the Council to become involved in this issue.

The building currently under construction has received planning consent – Planning Application 47/17/0013 refers.

**22/67 Reports of Parish Council Working Parties**

* 1. Report from Footpath leader – Cllr Kerr has several issues that he is waiting to discuss with the new Rights of Way Officer, including the diversion of footpath 31/26 through St Andrews field, the inaccessibility of T31/34 (Prey Lane) and a missing bridge at T31/1.
	2. Report from Trees/Conservation leader – Sheila Green has agreed to replace Nick Harrison-Sleap as the Tree warden for the Parish.
	3. Report on Highway matters –The Clerk will chase a response from Highways regarding the unsafe right turn from the A358 to West Hatch Lane.
	4. Report from SALC representative – Kate Walters agreed to take over as the SALC representative.

**22/68 Correspondence and matters of report.**

* **Free Tree Initiative**

Once again, Somerset West & Taunton Council have offered parishes free trees up to a value of £100. The Council has requested several trees which will be planted in St Andrews Field as part of its rewilding project.

* **Receipt of Community Infrastructure Levy Payment (CIL)**

The Clerk confirmed that payment of £1890 has been received in respect of a CIL payment relating to a new development at Meare Green. The Council has five years in which to utilise the funds which must be spent in accordance with the CIL criteria.

* **Report of Finance Working Party**

The Finance Working Party has proposed that there is no increase in the precept for 2023/24. The budget and precept request will be formally discussed and agreed at the next Parish Council meeting.

* **Parish event to view Millennium Books**

The Village Hall representative advised the Council that the Village Hall committee would like to stage a Parish event so that parishioners may view the Millennium Books, including the update, currently stored in the Somerset Archives. The Clerk advised that the permission of the Parish Council would be required and that the request would need to be considered as a formal agenda item at the next meeting of the Council.

**22/69 To agree date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25th January 2023

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm