

**WITHYPOOL AND HAWKRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL Draft Minutes**  
**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 7.30pm at Hawkridge Village Hall**

**Present: Parish Councillors:** A Howard – AH (Chair), T Lloyd - TL, A Collins – AC, W Lock – WL, J Soltau – JS, P Soltau – PS, A Morrissey (for part of meeting) - AM; **SC Cllr** F Nicholson - FN, **SC Cllr** S Pugsley (for part of meeting) – SP; **Clerk** R Tomalin; **Public:** Three

**Abbreviations:** ENPA – Exmoor National Park; SC – Somerset Council;

**For any Road defects** – please go to the SCC Road Defect Website -  
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

The meeting started at 7.34pm.

**22/24 Apologies of Absence:** Cllr A Morrissey and SC Cllr S Pugsley will be late

AC arrived at 7.36pm.

**21/24 Questions from the public:** Drainage in Hawkridge – members of the public raised concerns over the continuing issues with drainage in Hawkridge. The solution proposed by Highways may collect rainwater but will be inadequate for storm water which will lead to flooding of properties. FN & SP will raise again at their Highways meeting on Thursday. The PC will write and ask for Highways to come back out and meet with parishioners to discuss a solution which is satisfactory for all. Members of the public noted this was a health & safety issue affecting many residents and had caused damage to properties.

AM joined the meeting at 7.46pm.

One member of the public left the meeting at 8.04pm

**23/24 Declarations of notifiable interests:** None

**24/24 Approval of the Minutes** of the previous meeting on 09/01/2024: proposed by TL and 2<sup>nd</sup> by AC and all Approved. Chair then signed the minutes.

**25/24 Matters arising from the Minutes** of 09/01/2024: discussed under agenda items as appropriate. Clerk noted keys for the noticeboard were held by representatives of the church, village hall and in the village shop.

**26/24 Report by the Somerset Council Councillors:** FN reported that devolution of Highways maintenance will not happen in 2024-25. The public meeting to save the recycling centre in Dulverton had been packed out – SC have not confirmed which recycling centres will close. The work on the landslip at Roundwaters is running on time as the contractor has worked weekends to catch up. There will be a public meeting tomorrow to review progress.

**27/24 Planning:** None

**28/24 Broadband Scheme:** No update.

**29/24 Highways:** (i) Signage Tarr Steps – various options were suggested to deter visitors from trying to access Tarr Steps from the Hawkridge side. In order to make sure all residents are happy with the proposed signage changes a public meeting will be organised. KB will be asked to attend.

Two members of the public left at 8.40pm.

SP arrived at 8.46pm

(ii) Salt bags – FN/SP will ask when the salt bags are likely to be collected as the bins are usually filled with any excess from the salt bags (iii) Devolution of Highways Services – although this was withdrawn from the budget cuts it is likely this will be a short term reprieve. This will at least allow more time for the LCN to work out how some of the highways services could be provided across the parishes, noting that the LCN has no power to enter into contracts, apply for grants or hold money.

**30/24 Finance Report:** (i) Bank Reconciliation – £10,484.56 as at 10 March, this includes cleared Chq 583 for the noticeboard and rent received for Plot E. Chq 579 SALC £61.32 (yearly affiliation fee) has not yet cleared (ii) Approval of Invoices: Renewal of Website & Domain **Spanglefish £108 Chq 584**, Hall Hire for PC Meetings **Hawkridge Village Hall Committee £55.00 Chq 585 & Withypool Hall Management Committee £47.50 Chq 588**, Clerks Pay and Exp Dec 23-Feb 24 **R Tomalin £436.35 Chq 586** PAYE due to **HMRC £267.60 Chq 587** – all AGREED. No invoice has yet been received from AB for cutting the hedges. (iii) Internal Audit – with the financial year end approaching Cllrs agreed to ask Lyn Fisher to perform the internal audit again (iv) Cllr Training - Clerk has circulated training courses available from SALC (v) Savings Account – Clerk explained that Natwest has a Liquidity Manager 95 Day Notice Account at 4.25% interest and a 35 Day one at 3.25%. Cllrs approved the opening of a 95 Day Notice Account with an initial deposit of £5,000. Clerk will also check how funds can be transferred between the existing Reserve Account (easy access saver at 1.45%) and Current Account.

**31/24 Precept 2024-25:** For the benefit of those Cllrs who missed the last meeting Chair explained how the increase in precept had been decided. Clerk presented a FAQ sheet for Cllrs to assist with any questions from parishioners. Cllrs agreed this should be added to the PC website and village noticeboards.

**32/24 Parish Gardens:** (i) Plot E Update – TL has inspected the fence, a few fence posts and some barbed wire are required. He will source and ask the tenant to fix (ii) Plot C Tender – the Cllrs reviewed, discussed and voted on the bids received for Plot C, noting concerns raised by the previous tenant regarding the tender process and acknowledging that the PC may need to pay for more services under devolution from SC. Clerk to respond thanking the outgoing tenant for their good care of the land, note that the Parish Garden policy was sent to all existing tenants and ask them to replace the gate with a fence (assuming it is owned by the PC).

**33/24 Parish Maintenance:** (i) Grass Cutting Quote – Clerk reported that Dan Passmore had submitted a quote of £680 to cut all grass areas in Withypool on a regular basis, cut the beech hedge next to the car park and spray off weeds, and a quote of £180 to cut grass areas as requested in Hawkridge throughout the season and generally keep tidy. Grass cutting normally runs March to October but if an extra cut was needed in November there would be no extra charges. Cllrs agreed to accept the quotes (ii) Hedges in Car Park – AB has given the hedges in the car park and in the Jubilee Garden a good cut back (rather than a trim).

**34/24 Flood Group Plan** – PS reported that gel bags were now being used instead of sand bags, funding is available from Somerset Prepared to purchase these. An application has been submitted and a decision is due in April. The Environment Agency produces a booklet detailing the responsibilities of riparian owners. The extensive vegetation on the island by Withypool bridge was discussed – it was suggested this should be raised at the Flood Group as they have good connections to the Environment Agency.

**35/24 Chairman's Notices:** none

**36/24 Correspondence:** all correspondence has been circulated

**37/24 Report from representatives of other groups:**

- Withypool Village Hall – the bench commemorating Jill Scoins is in place, a plaque will be added. Some maintenance to the hall is required.
- Hawkridge Village Hall – the recent kitchen improvements have been welcomed and has helped with hall hire. It will be painted internally in the next 12 months. An application was made to the BHF for a free defib but was unsuccessful. Clerk will investigate whether a grant is available to part fund the cost. Cllrs agreed the maintenance of the defib would be paid by the PC.
- Henry Leigh Trust – the closing date for the next round is 31 March
- Exmoor LCN – minutes of the March meeting have been circulated
- Consultative & Parish Forum – will meet twice a year going forward

**38/24 Parish Community** including the social media page update, events by other groups not listed in **37/24:** none

**39/24 Items for May 2024 agenda:** Presentation of 2023-24 accounts, Audit, Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, GDPR, Aims & Objectives, Financial Regulations. The May meeting will include the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

**40/24 Date and time of next meeting:** the meeting will take place one week earlier than usual on 7<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm at Withypool Village Hall.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 10.04pm.

Signed.....Date.....