

WITHYPOOL AND HAWKRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL Draft Minutes
Tuesday 12th November 2024 6.30pm at Hawkridge Village Hall

Present: Parish Councillors: A Howard – AH (Chair), A Collins – AC, A Morrissey – AM, W Lock – WL, S Russell – SR, **SC Cllr** S Pugsley (for part of meeting) – SP; **Clerk** R Tomalin;
Public: One

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 6.35pm.

105/24 Questions from the public: None

106/24 Apologies of Absence: Cllr TL and SC Cllr FN. SC Cllr SP will be late as attending other meetings

107/24 Declarations of notifiable interests: None

108/24 Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting on 10/09/2024: proposed by AC and 2nd by AM and all Approved. Chair then signed the minutes.

WL arrived at 6.37pm

109/24 Matters arising from the Minutes of 10/09/2024: discussed under agenda items as appropriate. Since the last meeting Cllrs have visited West Hollowcombe and met with the applicant and their Planning Consultant. Locations nearer the curtilage were discussed and the applicant was advised to seek pre-application advice from ENPA. Clerk noted advice had been sought from the Monitoring Officer at SC regarding the statement read by a member of the public about parking issues. The Monitoring Officer reviewed the statement and confirmed this was a civil matter and not something the PC can get involved in. This has been conveyed to the member of the public.

110/24 Co-Option of Councillors: Since the last meeting JS and PS have both resigned. A public notice has been displayed in both villages noting that there are Cllr vacancies. The required notice period has been served and SC has confirmed that co-option may now take place. Chair proposes SR is co-opted, AM seconds the proposal. All Cllrs agree that SR is co-opted as a Cllr for W&H PC. A second person has expressed an interest in joining the PC. Chair & Clerk will follow up, an extraordinary meeting will be arranged but this must take place within 60 days of the vacancy notice (6th October). *Post meeting this was arranged for 27th November 2024.*

The agenda was taken out of order while waiting for SP to arrive.

112/24 Planning: none

114/24 Highways: see also Page 2 (i) AC reported six bags of salt have been delivered which he will drop off in the correct places (ii) The remedial drainage works in Hawkridge are currently in progress (iii) One Network online training is available on 19 November at 6pm, this session will be recorded for those who cannot attend (iv) Marked potholes in Withypool – these should be repaired soon (v) Westwater Bridge – pothole needs inspecting & repairing (vi) The Sandyway road will be closed during school hours for the first week in December between the Landacre turning & the Sportsmans.

115/24 Finance Report: (i) Bank Reconciliation – £6,272.34 as at 11 November, this includes balance of rent received for Plot B and all cheques approved at the September meeting. For the minutes Clerk noted the details of the cheque raised for the bench repairs **A Blackmore £160 Chq 599**. This was approved at the September meeting but not raised at the time. The Liquidity Manager account has now earned £141.86 interest since opening (ii) Approval of Invoices: **D Passmore £860 Chq 600** (grass cutting), **R Tomalin £280.33 Chq 601** (clerks salary Sept-Oct), **HMRC £186.40 Chq 603** (PAYE Sept-Oct) – all AGREED (iii) Training – Clerk noted a list of SALC training courses had been circulated. This included new Cllr training which SR would like to attend. Cllrs approved training for the two Cllr Essentials sessions.

116/24 Budget/Precept 2025-26: Clerk presented the PC's income and expenditure and Cllrs discussed the budget and precept for the coming financial year. All agreed to keep it the same as last year at £7,000. Clerk will complete the paperwork when it arrives from SC.

117/24 Parish Gardens: (i) Inspection Date – this will be postponed until the Spring when the weather is better and the evenings are lighter (ii) The balance of Plot B rent has been received (partially paid early a few months ago) (iii) Plot C – tenant asked if someone else may use the paddock for one week for a horse. Chair agreed.

118/24 Parish Maintenance: (i) Bleed Kits – Avon & Somerset Police have circulated some information about bleed kits which can be installed in prominent places (e.g next to the defib). AM noted that it was expensive for what it contained, these first aid items can be purchased individually for far less on the internet. AM will provide links for the necessary items (ii) Defib Hawkridge Village Hall – WL noted the urgency in purchasing a defib for the village. The PC has previously agreed to pay for the maintenance of the defib as it does for the one in Withypool which was grant funded by SC. Clerk will investigate what grants are available and Cllrs agreed Clerk may make applications as appropriate. AM will also make enquiries.

SP arrived at 7.30pm during the defib discussion

111/24 Report by Somerset Council Councillors: (i) SC Proposed Redundancies – SP noted SC are proposing approx. 500 job cuts given their financial shortfall. This appears to have been decided with little review of value-add and the Highways team will be severely impacted. This is very disappointing given the efforts to make the Highways pilot work on Exmoor. This has seen enhanced working relationships, quicker response times, a better understanding of the challenges Exmoor communities face and cost efficiencies. The success of the Highways pilot has seen it rolled out across the County. PCs may wish to write to the Leader and Chief Exec to express their views.

(ii) Boundary Commission Review – a re-warding exercise is underway which will reduce the number of Cllr seats from 110 in 55 divisions to 96 in 96 divisions. This is largely about having the same number of electors in each division, however it is important that similar parishes remain together as they face exactly the same issues with a sparse population, are linked by schools and are subject to ENPA Planning Authority rather than SC. The consultation runs until 20th January. Clerk to prepare a response which can be submitted as the PC and by individual Cllrs – it is important to convey the same message.

(iii) Moorland Foodbank – the LCN (largely through the efforts of FN & SM) has done an excellent job of co-ordinating a new team and location for the foodbank. This is now housed in the old youth club building in Dulverton and has 8 volunteer trustees. It has progressed a huge amount in a very short period of time.

114/24 Highways: (i) Signage Tarr Steps – given the likely reduction in Highways services it is important to arrange the meeting asap and agree what wording is required (ii) Greystone Gate – this has still not been cleared – Clerk will report again. Comers Gate has been repaired. (iii) Withypool Bridge – this is periodically inspected by engineers for structural issues, they will be aware of the re-pointing that is required (iv) Slade Bridge needs emptying again as do the drains on Anstey Hill – Clerk to report (v) Hedges – some hedges in the village need urgent attention as they are causing blind spots. Cllrs will speak to residents but if they are not cut SC will be asked to take action.

113/24 Broadband Scheme: No updates. The government has a revised scheme for a much bigger contract. With the switch on of some of the mobile masts across the moor EE coverage is now available in some locations, and Starlink is also being used by those unable to receive decent speeds through conventional broadband.

119/24 Flood Group Plan – Chair noted PS was keen to continue to attend the Flood Group meetings. Clerk reported that Somerset Rivers Authority would shortly be launching a new round of grant funding. Chair will ask PS whether the PC was successful in the previous round. Clerk will create a new page on the PC website for flooding & other useful information.

120/24 Chairman’s Notices: Chair raised whether the PC wished to contribute to a number-plate recognition camera. SP suggested the landlord at the Rest and Be Thankful at Wheddon Cross should be contacted as one is in operation there. Cllrs were concerned about potential GDPR issues.

121/24 Correspondence: all correspondence has been circulated. A parishioner has requested that the Cllrs consider an out of office response on the PC email. Cllrs agreed that an email receipt may be sent with a link to an FAQ page on the website. Clerk explained that the PC had been receiving a large amount of emails from the same parishioner, often asking the same questions. Advice had been sought from the Monitoring Officer at SC who suggested the PC may wish to adopt a Persistent and Vexatious Complainant Policy. Clerk to investigate for discussion at the January meeting.

122/24 Report from representatives of other groups:

- Withypool Village Hall – the Harvest Supper was held 6th October and the craft fair is this coming weekend (16/17th Nov). The hall lights have been replaced and painting has started
- Hawkrigge Village Hall – no meeting, painting has started in the hall
- Henry Leigh Trust – deadline for next applications is 31st December
- Exmoor LCN – see **111/24** for updates. JS was the LCN rep – Chair or AC will attend now meetings
- Exmoor National Park Forum – next meeting is 6th Dec @ 1.30pm at the Moorland Hall

123/24 Parish Community including the social media page update, events by other groups not listed in **122/24:** Post ENPA’s Active Travel Plan on the community FB page.

124/24 Items for January 2025 agenda: Persistent and Vexatious Complainant Policy

125/24 Date and time of next meeting: 14th January at 6.30pm at Withypool Village Hall

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.52pm.

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