

WITHYPOOL AND HAWKRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL Draft Minutes
Tuesday 14th January 2025 6.30pm at Withypool Village Hall

Present: Parish Councillors: A Howard – AH (Chair), T Lloyd – TL, K Branfield – KB, 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 6.36pm.

1/25 Questions from the public: None

2/25 Apologies of Absence: SC Cllr FN, SC Cllr SP will be late as attending other meetings

3/25 Declarations of notifiable interests: None

4/25 Approval of the Minutes of the previous meetings on 12/11/2024 and 27/11/24: proposed by AC and 2nd by AM and all Approved. Chair then signed the minutes.

WL arrived at 6.40pm

5/25 Matters arising from the Minutes of 12/11/2024 and 27/11/24: discussed under agenda items as appropriate.

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

7/25 Planning: none. Clerk noted West Hollowcombe Farm had emailed to say thanks for the Cllrs site visit and advice.

8/25 Broadband Scheme: Cllrs noted Rachel Gilmour had a meeting in Parliament about rural broadband schemes. See also **8/25 on Page 2** for update from SP.

9/25 Highways: see also **Page 2** (i) Salt bags and bins need to be refilled as the green routes were not gritted – Clerk to report (ii) The pothole on Westwater bridge needs to be reported again as nothing has been done (iii) Chair raised a request from a parishioner that the PC contact all parishioners and ask them not to block the access to Old Bridge Road. The PC has been asked to contact parishioners directly in the past regarding Highways matters but has declined to do so. The Cllrs discussed the request and considered whether general notices may be more appropriate, however as this is a Highways matter Cllrs agreed that it should be dealt with by the Highways team at SC.

10/25 Finance Report: (i) Bank Reconciliation – £5,045.52 as at 14 January, this includes rent received for Plot E and all cheques approved at the November meeting. The Liquidity Manager account has now earned £192.09 interest since opening (ii) Approval of Invoices: none presented (iii) Internal Audit – Cllrs agreed to ask LF if she would be prepared to perform the internal audit again

11/25 Parish Gardens: Rent for Plot E has been received.

12/25 Parish Maintenance: Defib Hawkridge – Clerk reported that a charitable trust has agreed to give a grant of £500. AM has been in contact with the Cave Foundation and it is likely funding may be available. WL noted Hawkridge Village Hall Committee had also made some enquiries. It was agreed that the Hawkridge Village Hall committee will make the application to the Cave Foundation.

13/25 Flood Group Plan – a new funding round is now open. PS applied for a previous round of funding, the status of the application needs to be followed up with the Flood Group.

14/25 Chairman's Notices: Chair passed on the sad news that a former colleague of the PC had suffered an unexpected close family bereavement. Cllrs wished to pass on their condolences, Chair will send a card.

15/25 Correspondence: (i) Persistent and Vexatious Complainant Policy – Cllrs agreed to postpone this discussion until the annual review of all policies.

16/25 Report from representatives of other groups:

- Withypool Village Hall – no meeting, new blinds have been ordered
- Hawkridge Village Hall – no meeting
- Henry Leigh Trust – the December applications will be discussed this coming Thursday. HLT gives grants to contribute towards a range of activities including driving lessons, music lessons, swimming lessons, laptops, books etc.
- Exmoor LCN – next meeting is this Thursday 16th January
- Exmoor National Park Forum – the December forum was very well attended

17/25 Parish Community including the social media page update, events by other groups not listed in **16/25**: Chair to set up W&H email for AM. Clerk to reshare FB post about hedge trimming as time is short before the nesting season starts.

SP arrived at 7.55pm.

SR asked whether there were any First Responders in the village and if anyone would be interested in training. Dulverton Fire Brigade are the closest known First Responders. Exford PC is arranging a First Aid course for their parishioners; W&H may be able to share. EHFN also arrange first aid courses twice a year. SR to contact Exford PC.

AM has sourced prices to make up a first aid kit. Cllrs discussed responsibility for checking the kit regularly and replacing expired items. A decision was taken not to pursue further at this time.

8/25 Broadband Scheme: SP reported no further movement with the broadband scheme. The scheme has changed to be a national roll out, rather than smaller schemes at local level, Exmoor falls within the Western England region.

9/25 Highways: (i) Winter Maintenance – SP reported that the recent decision at Comers Cross by the gritter had been raised with the Highways team. The green routes including Hawkridge & Sandyway had not been gritted as there was no spare capacity. SP has written to the Leader to ask that a permanent solution is found. Exmoor is colder, wetter, higher, and is prone to more frost and ice and has steeper roads than most of the towns being gritted on the red routes (ii) Hawkridge Drainage – the repair work has been completed but there is still mud all over the road and repairs to fix damage caused by the excessive water further down the road have been done to a minimal level. Clerk to report to Highways (iii) Marshclose Hill is currently impassable as trees have fallen over and displaced the road, Highways are aware (iv) Tarr Steps Signage - a meeting has been held with the

residents most affected by the traffic trying to access Tarr Steps. The PC would like to thank the Hawkridge Working Group for all their time and effort in coming up with some recommendations. A key message was for consistency on both sides of Tarr Steps – the signage on Tarr Farm side is very different to that on Hawkridge side. Clerk will forward the recommendations to ENPA and KB in Traffic Management for their views. A public meeting for all parishioners should also be held once there is feedback from ENPA & TM as the proposed new signage will impact both villages. Chair will send details of how to change a postcode to the residents of Marshclose Hill as he has done this before (v) Landslip at Portford Bridge – this has been reported to Highways and they quickly erected barriers, however remedial work needs to take place urgently before the road slips away and becomes a much bigger job like at Roundwater.

6/25 Report by Somerset Council Councillors: (i) Boundary Commission – SC has voted against the proposed response to the Boundary Commission, it is not clear whether SC will submit any response as the deadline is 20th January. Parishes are encouraged to respond to the consultation run by the Boundary Commission. It is important that parishes with similar characteristics and challenges remain together.

18/25 Items for March 2025 agenda: Grass Cutting

19/25 Date and time of next meeting: 11th March at 7.30pm at Hawkridge Village Hall

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 9.07pm.

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