

## **WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **DRAFT Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Winsford Parish Council Held on Monday 28 November 2022, at 19.30pm in Winsford Village Hall**

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Colin Wilkins (CW) – Chair, Kevin Connell (KC), Mel Mileham (MM), Mike Hillier (MH), Ian Brooks (IB), Bryany Neal (BN) and Clerk Jennifer Yates (JY). Councillors Frances Nicholson (FN) and Stephen Pugsley (SP) joined for part of the meeting.

CW opened the meeting at 19.34pm.

**58.1 Public Question Time - None**

**58.2 Apologies for non-attendance – Sarah Little**

**58.3 Declaration of Interests – CW and BN are immediate neighbours of the property in the planning item 58.5.**

**58.4 To agree the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meetings held 26<sup>th</sup> September and the Extra-ordinary meetings held 17<sup>th</sup> October and 14<sup>th</sup> November, and any outstanding actions –** 26<sup>th</sup> September, approved, proposed KC, seconded BN approved by all. 17<sup>th</sup> October, approved, proposed IB, seconded KC, approved by all. 14<sup>th</sup> November, amendments suggested and agreed by all (to remove the sentence re the council acting as planning authority as not understood by all councillors).

**58.5 To consider planning matters:**

**a. Application No: 6/40/22/13 BRIDGE COTTAGE, WINSFORD, MINEHEAD, TA24 7JE**

**Proposal: Proposed change of use from existing tea rooms to bed and breakfast, along with partial demolition of existing rear extension and construction of new extension**

Discussion took place about the importance of the Tea Room to visitors of the village and the potential disappointment it would be to regular visitors for it to no longer be a visitor attraction which is considered to be a major asset to the village. However, it was recognised that the current owners had tried to sell it as an ongoing business without success. It was discussed there are already other local places for people to stay but nothing similar in offer to the Tea Room.

Voting took place on the proposed change of use – 4 against and 2 abstained.

Voting took place on the partial demolition – all were in support of the remodelling if it is deemed necessary

**58.6 To discuss progress re the ENPA conservation area proposal and what further involvement the council needs to take –** Following discussion it was decided that the council would not proceed with the ballot as on reflection it was not possible to ensure it was carried out fairly within the timescale. It was recognised that people had been given the opportunity to feed back directly to the National Park at the two face to face meetings and through online feedback/letter writing. As Parish Councillors there is a responsibility to make the best judgement on behalf of the village and to agree what is in the best interest of the village going forward. The Council has received correspondence giving support to the proposal. In the West Somerset/Exmoor area a number of other councils/villages have gone ahead with the changes. Residents have expressed a range of views on this, both those living in and outside of the proposed designated conservation area. It was recognised that if

the Councillors could not agree on the proposal that would, in fact, be a fair representation of the village views.

Voting took place on whether the Councillors agree that the proposed conservation area would be a good thing for the village – 3 for, 1 abstained and 2 against.

- 58.7 To discuss 2 Ash Lane** – There is concern that this site is still derelict. Progress had previously before the pandemic but then has appeared to have ceased. It is recognised that housing is needed in the village and it was discussed as to whether this needed to be taken to the District and County Councils with the aim of resolving what is to happen on the site, and to progress with providing homes for young families, as it is understood that the council has the power to intervene.

FN and SP joined the meeting at 20.27

FN mentioned that the issue of rural housing had been brought up at the most recent Panel meeting with the Rural Housing Enabler Colin MacDonald in attendance. SP suggested that there are likely to be new arrangements for council tax when unification takes place and this may affect empty homes, increasing the pressure for them to be put into use. SP will attempt to re-establish the position regarding 2 Ash Lane.

- 58.8 To receive an update re the defibrillator** – SL was not able to attend the meeting and this item will be moved to the next meeting. The age of the current defibrillator was mentioned, and it was proposed that SL explores the next steps as to whether parts or the whole may need to be replaced.

- 58.9 To agree arrangements for Christmas and a Christmas Tree** – The purchase of a tree was proposed by CW and seconded by IB. It was agreed to spend up to £100 – proposed CW and seconded by MM. Decoration is to be by Mr and Mrs Hunt.

- 58.10 Reports from County and District Councillors** – The Local Community Network Pilot is continuing and is likely to be in place for another 12 – 18 months. The results of the consultation have been put back, likely to now be in January.

At a recent SCC meeting rates and rate relief were explored as the areas across Somerset are being brought together and aligned in approach. A consultation may come out shortly.

Council tax is going to change as a result of unification, and it is being discussed as to how second homes will be treated, with the likelihood of increased council tax on second homes. It is anticipated that empty homes will also progressively be required to pay more council tax.

The recently circulated email from the Stogumber Parish Council re West Somerset Council tax has raised an issue which had previously not been recognised, ie that Taunton Deane had previously issued grants to its rural parishes, but when Taunton Deane and West Somerset were merged this appears to have continued for the Taunton Deane parishes, but not been added for the West Somerset ones. This will all be taken into account as part of the unification process.

There was still no update re the Mast at the recent Forum meeting, and the fact remains that the village is exposed to danger due to lack of communications in the event of electrical failures. MM has had an update following her meeting in Exeter that the mast could potentially be designated for emergency services use only, which would not be in the best interests of the village. The Home Office and local politician are not responding to communications. It was agreed pressure needs to continue to seek answers.

FN mentioned that the Exmoor Housing Network has been putting together working groups and will be producing help guides. She said that Homefinder has been recognised as problematic and is being looked at with the aim of providing a better service.

**58.11 To consider Highways Matters, including:**

**a. Yellowcombe Leat** – A pipe has been installed and appears to be working well, and the shoring up is managing for now. FN shared that a long term solution is being sought, potentially replacing the leat.

**b. Trees on Howtown Lane** – The trees have been removed successfully. Advanced signage was put on Halse Lane by mistake. It was remedied and the access for emergency vehicles was put in place.

**c. Update on works near the Stables** – Despite very heavy recent rain there has been no flooding so this appears to have been successful.

**d. AOB** – IB has continued to send in work requests to the Highway Steward successfully. FN reported that Mr Gay has been successfully appointed as a highways supervisor and his successor is being sought with the aim of a January start. Sam Murrell will continue in her role organising the planning of works.

FN and SP were thanked and left the meeting at 21.04

**58.12 Finance:**

**a. To receive financial report and agree to pay amounts due** – Received and approved, Proposed BN and seconded IB and approved by all. Payments to be made to clerk – £326 pay and expenses, HMRC £52.80 Tax, Mr C Wilkins £132.08 picture framing costs and poppy wreath.

**b. To discuss Clerk's backpay and Printer** – Following a national pay agreement it was agreed that the adjustment in the clerk's hourly rate would be paid and backdated to April 22 as recommended by the agreement. Proposed KC and seconded BN. It was agreed the clerk could find out prices for a new printer and purchase one up to the cost of £100. Proposed KC and seconded CW.

**c. To discuss travel expenses for councillors** – Several councillors have recently attended meetings in Yeovil, Exeter and North Petherton incurring travel costs. It was agreed that it is appropriate for recompense to be made using the appropriate tariff, which JY needs to confirm with SALC.

**d. To elect sub-committee for budgeting and ongoing financial business** – Following the recent difficulties with CAF bank JY is keen for a sub-committee to be in place for her to call on when such difficulties arise. It was agreed that KC, BN and CW would support

**e. To set a date for budget and precept planning** - the date was set for the budget/precept meeting for this sub-committee 5<sup>th</sup> January at 2pm

**58.13 To discuss the Ann Le Bas Bequest:**

**a. Update re bequest of field** – BN informed the Council that four Trustees are now in place on the Recreation Committee and therefore she and JY are in a position to proceed with contacting the agreed solicitors to move the process forward.

**b. Remainder of prints and plan to clear** – The agreement with Courtyard Framing to carry out some framing in exchange for some pieces of Art has concluded. MM will liaise with Courtyard Framing with regard to the sale/auction of the final prints with both parties expected to receive a percentage of the proceeds.

**58.14 To discuss arrangements for the installation of the new Village Green Swings:**

- a. To receive with thanks the donation to cover the cost of replacing the swings on the Village Green** – Mrs Sue Hayes has again shown outstanding fundraising skills and so far has raised £6,290 which was presented to the Council and received with thanks. A further cheque for £1,000 was presented from Winsford United Charities and was received with thanks. A further £778 is known to have been raised.
- b. To agree to spend the remaining Reconnecting Communities Grant fund towards the swings** – CW has made enquiries with regard to the appropriate use of the remaining funds £678.58 and had it confirmed that it would be completely appropriate for the funds to be used for this purpose. Proposed KC and seconded IB.
- c. To agree to spend up to a sum of £9,092.50 to pay for the purchase and installation of replacement swings on the Green** – The remaining outstanding balance following the above donations would be £314 and the Parish Council agreed that it would make up the shortfall should that be necessary. Proposed KC and seconded MH. Agreement to pay the full sum for the purchase was proposed by IB and seconded by CW  
The councillors wished to express their thanks to the community for their excellent contributions to the fundraising led by Sue Hayes.  
Thanks were expressed to IB and MH for their hard work on this project.
- d. Further arrangements – next steps** – JY to pay the cheques into the Council account and pass the downpayment cheque and paperwork to the company so the order and work can begin.

**58.15 Winsford Charitable Trust:**

- a. Agree the minutes of the meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> September** – amendments discussed and agreed (to remove names of individuals who had contributed because we should name all or none)
- b. Maintenance of the Village Green** – One more cut is to take place before year end. Brambles and leaves will be tidied.
- c. Financial Report** – CAF Cash £823.37, CAF Gold £2,189.77. JY reported that CAF bank wished to close the account as they need information. She is in contact with them and the financial advisor to resolve the issue. A new mandate was signed at the meeting removing two signatories (Nic Kemp and Patrick Watts-Mabbott) who are no longer with the Council.
- d. Wooden Slats on Bridge** – Nothing has been heard from the ENPA team yet, they had made a commitment to do the work when they next use the materials needed.
- e. AOB** – Details were shared re the Cave Foundation Trust. This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting. They can provide funding for local projects such as benches and possibly the skittle alley.

**58.16 To discuss start times for future meetings** – in the absence of SL it was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting, along with a proposal to move to monthly meetings.

- 58.17 To discuss a plan to welcome new residents, holiday home and rental visitors to the village** – The Council is in favour of this idea, however until the outcome of the conservation consultation there is a degree of uncertainty. The Council is happy for Mr Luscott to make some further progress with this.
- 58.18 Correspondence and Emails received** – an email was received re the prompt publication of minutes. The clerk does endeavour to do so, however with just 3.5 hours per week this is not always possible if more urgent business takes place. An email was received with regard to the conservation area.
- 58.19 Reports from Councillors on meetings attended** – BN attended a Panel Meeting and also a Housing Crisis meeting. MM has attended a BT meeting in Exeter and a ‘Somerset Be Prepared’ emergency response meeting. MH attended a SCOP meeting and MM/KC attended a Forum Meeting.
- 58.20 Items for Next Agenda** – The Defibrillator. The Cave Foundation. Frequency and timing of meetings.
- 58.21 Date of Next meeting** – Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 7.30 in Winsford Village Hall