West Huntspill Parish Council

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at 7:00 pm on 8th January 2024 at The Balliol Hall, Church Road, West Huntspill.**

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| **i)** | **Members present:** Cllr J Wakefield**,** Cllr M Saunders, Cllr A Clapp, Cllr R Keen, Cllr A Higgs & Cllr J Wilks  The Clerk – Mrs Alex Harris | **Action** |
| **ii)** | **Members of public present:** None |  |
| **iii)** | **Somerset Councillors present**: None |  |
| **1.** | **Apologies for absence**: None |  |
| **2** | **Dispensation requests**: None |  |
| **3.** | **Minutes and Clerks Report**  Cllr A Clapp proposed the Minutes were a true record of the meeting on the 12/12/23. Cllr A Higgs seconded this, and the Council **resolved** this was a true record. Cllr Saunders and Cllr Wakefield approved the Clerks report, and the Council **resolved** this was accepted. |  |
| **4.** | **Matters Arising:**  The original steel boundary sign has been repaired but re-installed further into the village. Residents have complained and wish it to be re-sited back to its original position.  Flooding of the Hams – Mr Brian Jones who lives in this area has received a letter advising of a possible compulsory purchase order on his and surrounding homes. A meeting is being held in Pawlett on 30/1/24 for residents. Cllr J Wilks will attend.  Members of the electorate have received correspondence advising of a a public consultation survey on increasing the police precept in the next financial years by £10 for an average band D property. |  |
| **5.** | **Report from Cllr M Healey (Somerset Council) – No report received** |  |
| **6.** | **Planning**  **Brue Farm update:** Houses are now being occupied and a newt net has been placed to the boundary of the rhyne and adjoining field. |  |
| **7.** | **Somerset Council asset and service devolution**  Cllr J Wakefield attended a Local Community Network (LCN) meeting to discuss the financial crisis facing Somerset Council. He advised the Council on the details of the meeting.  The Council agreed to accept the following responsibilities and budget for these into the precept for 2024/25:  Dog Bin emptying x 2 bins weekly - Cllr Higgs will contact Extreme Clean for quote.  Completion of the asset register will be completed by the Clerk and returned. Working with surrounding villages would be an option, however, to cope with the new workload an increase in precept would be required. |  |
| **8.** | **War Memorial playing field and Cricket Club**  The plaque has been delivered and left at the Pavilion for Mr Counsell to install.  Trees at the ground have not yet been pollarded due to land being saturated with rain. This work may happen on 11/1/24 subject to the weather.  Scalpings for the carpark have been delivered and spread but not compacted yet. |  |
| **9.** | **Ilex Park**  A site visit today was attended by Mr Alan Clapp, Cllr Wilks, Cllr Clapp, and Cllr Wakefield to assess the amount of safety sand required to bring the park up to the correct standard. Figures will follow.  GB leisure will be on site shortly to quote for wet pour around equipment and a new spinner.  Mark Pugsley of ASP fencing has removed the broken equipment. |  |
| **10** | **Common, Trees and Footpaths / Green areas**  All ditches are currently draining well – no attention needed at present.  Stoney Path – A resident has encroached his boundary to the edge of Stoney path by approximately 6ft in depth and 20ft length. This has been reported to building control. The resident has fenced in 3 dead Ash trees. The Council has asked whose responsibility to do these now fall to too?  A quote has been received to reduce the height of the conifer trees on the Common to hedge height. The cost is approximately £400+Vat. The council resolved this should go ahead.  The leaning wall which boundaries a public footpath at Grove Road has been reported to Somerset Council but no action yet taken.  The fall trees on the Bridleway have also been reported to ROW. | AH/Clerk |
| **11** | **Village Plan and Neighbourhood Plan**  The Council agreed to investigate the possibility of creating a Neighbourhood plan. Cllr Wilks and Cllr Shaw are keen to take on this project.  West Huntspill has a current population of 1102 residents. |  |
| **12** | **Projects**  **Clean Sweep** planned for March 2024. | Clerk |
| **13** | **CIL Funds**  Solar Speed Signs – Awaiting a date from Somerset Council for a site visit.  Planter x 1 has been built and the second currently under construction. They will be installed in the spring.  Map area on Common – Cllr Clapp will contact Don Bishop regarding photographs for a new map.  The wooden bench from the Common has been refurbished by Cllr Saunders and Cllr Higgs.  Metal benches (Post Office and White Cottage) still need to be refurbished. Cllr Higgs will arrange.  Land at Old Pawlett Road need clearing. The resident who lives in the area has agreed to complete this as its in his rental agreement.  Ilex Park Finger post sign directional sign needed from A38.  The Clerk has contacted Rachel Gundry regarding 2 x mosaics at the boundary markers for the village. Ms Gundry is drafting ideas and will be in touch in Feb to discuss further. | All |
| **14** | **Area Report:**  **Ringstone/Withy Road –** Trees have been cut bordering Withy Road.  **Church Road** – Cllr Shaw to contact the drainage board regarding the viewed rhyne in Church Road.  Streetlight outside 12 Grove Road is not working – Report to SC.  **Main Road** – Clerk to get Title Deeds for area in Millgreen Close that is unkempt, so the owner can be contacted and asked to clear the area. Residents are keen to do this work if needed.  Drain in Swell Close and Chapel Forge Close is blocked – report to Highways.  **Alstone** – During recent heavy rain the roads flooded around Taunton Kitchen area also large pine trees have been cut down near Alstone Equestrian centre. | Clerk |
| **15** | **Financial items:**   * Statement of Accounts * To agree the following payments:   Mrs Alex Harris £724.67 – Clerks salary  Mrs Alex Harris £45.97 – Telephone, website, and Office 360  EDF Pavilion - £173.03  EDF Common - £7.00  ASP (Ilex) £462.00 – Removal and repairs of equipment  Arien Signs – Pavilion £69.60  GB Leisure Goal Posts (CIL) £2010.30  The Council **resolved** the banking statement, and all payments were a true record and approved.  **Budget and Precept**  The Council discussed increasing the precept by approximately £10,000 to cover the new duties that the Parish Council would need to cover due to SC financial issues. The precept would increase by approximately 50%. The Council resolved after the Clerks Budget report that the precept should increase by 50%. This equates to £10,000 per year.  Reasons for this were increasing electricity and maintenance costs and Somerset Council unable to meet the demands of maintenance that they normally would facilitate.  The Council will request £31,000. A statement will be realised to the public advising why it has taken this step. All Council members agreed. | Clerk |
| **16** | **Matters of report: None** |  |
| **17** | **Date & time of next meeting:**  12th February 2023 – 7pm – Balliol Hall |  |
| **18** | The meeting closed at: 20.10 |  |