

## CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs. Miss L Jones (Chairman), Mrs J Saunders, Mrs J Zebedee, Dr C Bass, Mrs R Balchin, Sarah Leppard and the Clerk. The volunteer footpath warden was present for part of the meeting.

1. Democratic Period: None.
2. Apologies: Cllrs. Mrs J Saunders, DCC Cllr. R Radford, MDDC Cllrs. Natasha Bradshaw and S Clist.
3. Declarations of Interest: Cllr. Dr. Bass declared a DPI in the general precept discussion regarding a grant for Blackdown Hills Early Music Project.
4. The Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 06/12/23 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
5. Matters Arising: None.
6. Co-option - to approve a draft co-option policy. A policy was agreed. It was further noted that notice of resignation had just been received from Cllr. Tim Platel; a Notice of Vacancy has been prepared by MDDC for display.
7. **Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
  - 7.1 Applications to be considered: None.
  - 7.2 Notification of date of Hearing in respect of the following application - 21/01499/FULL Change of use of agricultural land to allow the siting of 1 mobile home and associated works for the use of gypsy and traveller family (Revised Scheme). Land at NGR 310236 115114 (Bartletts) Culmstock. Appeal Ref No. APP/Y1138/W/23/3328724. Agreed for Cllr. Dr Bass to attend and speak on behalf of the Parish Council.
  - 7.3 To note that the following applications were considered under delegation it was agreed for no objections:  
-23/01478/FULL Construction of equine exercise arena. Land at NGR 309990 113118 Western Counties Equine Hospital, Culmstock.  
-23/01758/FULL Conversion of a barn to a dwelling and single storey extension. Land and Building at NGR 309270 114192 Prescott, Uffculme.
  - 7.4 Results from Mid Devon District Council.  
-23/01787/FULL Removal of condition 3 of planning permission 22/00024/FULL relating to holiday occupancy only of the annexe (Revised Scheme). Chesterfield House, Burlescombe, Tiverton. EX16 7JY. Approved.
  - 7.5 Any other Planning Matters: None.
8. **Flooding.**
  - 8.1 Flood Protection for Community Buildings. (i) Details have been received from DCC and The Culm Catchment Officer regarding a free survey and funds available in respect of the Flood Resilience Project for property flood protection for buildings considered community assets. Information will be passed on to various organisations that may benefit. (ii) Other matters: Cllr. Dr. Bass gave a brief update on South West Water's management of the foul drainage overflow from a combined sewer inspection cover adjacent to the river during periods of high rainfall. Several complaints had been made over a period of years because raw sewage was seen to escape into the river; SWW were requested to examine the integrity of both the cover and the condition of the main CS line under the river prior to entering the treatment plant. The cover has been mended to ensure no further escape and the CS line was cleared of a fatberg. Residents have been advised of this and reminded to flush only 3Ps.
9. **Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion**
  - 9.1 Petanque - to note any further feedback following recent publicity & to consider the possibility of constructing a pitch at the Parish playing field. Deferred to a future meeting.
  - 9.2 Any other matters: The Clerk will arrange for the annual Fire Risk Assessment to take place.
10. **Reports.**
  - 10.1 The Chairman: None.
  - 10.2 The Clerk: The Clerk will attend an online workshop hosted via MDDC regarding the Shared Prosperity Programme.

- 10.3** P3/Footpaths and/or Access. (i) Mid Devon Walking Festival – 14<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Details of a suggested route will be submitted to MDDC in preparation for a walk in Culmstock, hosted via the Parish Council footpath wardens; final details will be confirmed. (ii) Apologies from the P3 Co-ordinator, the volunteer footpath warden was in attendance and a report was given: FP21-repeated clearance of drains at end of lane and the Craddock Road. FP6 & FP1- clearing of ditch and drain and cutting up some fallen branches. FP1 - fencing and bridle gate. As a result of clearance of debris from the lane it has been noticed that soil/silt has washed off the track and under the gate which causes a heap of mud. More branches have fallen causing damage to the fence which has now been repaired. Some “slow” signs may be considered on the beacon with reference to cyclists. FP9 - clearing ditch and some repairs to gaps in the fence. FP22 - clearing around kissing gate and some clearance in lane. A stile is due to be replaced at the top of lane. A quotation will be sourced to install some sleepers. *The volunteer footpath warden left the meeting.*
- 10.4** Highways: The Clerk and Cllr. Dr Bass reported on a report submitted to Highways regarding defective road markings on Fore Street and at the junction between Fore Street and The Cleeve - the Clerk has asked DCC Cllr. Radford to intervene and to provide an update.
- 10.5** Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors including reminder of MDDC State of the District Debate 2023/24 - notification of a date is awaited for the State of the District Debate. A report had been received from DCC Cllr. Radford, details include - there is a change of Neighbourhood Highways Officer and the new NHO will be in post by the end of the month. Preparations are being made towards the budget which will be presented to the full council on 15/02/24. In the Autumn Statement, announced on 22/11/23 government confirmed that the national living wage will increase by 9.8% to £11.44 per hour. The ongoing problem of dealing with potholes/defects is difficult due to poor weather. There are up to 26 defect gangs across the county undertaking pothole repairs, supported by two additional sub-contractor gangs.
- 11. Finance.**
- 11.1** Finance report: To note the bank balance as at 30/12/23 - £49,478.60. Direct Debits taken, Nest 07/12 - £124.38 & £110.15 on 21/12, Pennon Water Service 08/11 - £46.06. Credits received in respect of cemetery fees £600 on 01/12 and £530 on 18/12.
- 11.2** Payments were resolved:
- Chq 1882 £ 19.94 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
  - Chq 1883 £ 820.80 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Maintenance contract.
  - Chq 1884 £ 865.83 Clerk - salary & expenses.
  - Chq 1885 £ 175.77 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
  - Chq 1886 £ 312.00 MDDC. Litter bin emptying.
  - Chq 1887 £ 201.60 MDDC. Play area inspections.
  - Chq 1888 £ 18.00 Culmstock Village Hall. Room hire
- 11.3** To note that the following cheque numbers were agreed under delegation - 1880 (HMRC quarterly payment - £630.32) and 1881 (AET Flood Defence - £476.40).
- 11.4** Audit 2023/24: The Clerk will instruct the Independent Examiner to carry out an internal examination after 31/03/24 prior to the external audit.
- 11.5** Precept 2024/2025: To agree a figure for the Parish precept. The Clerk advised that there is no referendum limit for Town/Parish Councils for the financial year 2024/25. Following an informal meeting with the Clerk and Chairman and circulation of suggested figures to cover financial needs for the coming year, a report was given and it was resolved to set the precept at £44,811. The figure includes annual grants for Culmstock Village Hall and Culmstock Beacon of Lights (Christmas lights) and a grant for the Blackdown Hills Early Music Project. Funds were also included for improvements at the Parish playing field, purchase of new benches and noticeboards in the Parish. Funds will continue to be built for Collier’s bridge project. An amount will be included for the general reserve. Councillors were unanimous in their decision to set the precept at £44,811. As in previous years, MDDC will deduct the subscription for DALC. *See declarations.*
- 11.6** Any other financial matters: None.
- 12. Culmstock Cemetery.** None.
- 13. Correspondence & Any Consultations.** [Peninsula Transport – consultation on regional transport strategy.](#)  
[MDDC Survey - Share your views on rural services in Mid Devon.](#)
- 14. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates** - 14/02, 13/03, 10/04. Collier’s bridge project (March 2024 agenda).