

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th February 2024 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

Present: Mrs J Zebedee (Acting Chairman), Dr C Bass, Mrs R Balchin, Mrs J Saunders, Sarah Leppard, C Kay, MDDC Cllr. S Clist, DCC Cllr. R Radford (part of meeting) and the Clerk. *Due to apologies received from the Chairman Cllr. Miss L Jones, the Vice-Chairman took the meeting.*

17. Democratic Period: None.
18. Apologies: Cllr. Miss Jones & MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw.
19. Declarations of Interest: Cllr. Dr Bass declared a DPI in cheque number 1896 due to it being a personal payment.
20. The Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 17/01/24 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
21. Matters Arising: None. *DCC Cllr. Radford gave his report here and left the meeting at minute 26 - see 24.5*
22. **Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
 - 22.1 Applications considered: None.
 - 22.2 Results from Mid Devon District Council.
 - 23/01478/FULL Construction of equine exercise arena. Land at NGR 309990 113118 Western Counties Equine Hospital, Culmstock. Approved.
 - 23/01758/FULL Conversion of a barn to a dwelling and single storey extension. Land and Building at NGR 309270 114192 Prescott, Uffculme. Approved.
 - 22.3 Any other Planning Matters. (i) Notification of a CPRE Planning Workshop on 08/03 at Hatherleigh; Cllrs. Dr Bass and Mrs Zebedee will attend. (ii) Cllr. Dr Bass and MDDC Cllr. Clist reported on the informal hearing which took place over six hours in respect of 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; a decision should be received within several weeks.
23. **Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.**
 - 23.1 Estimate for maintenance works: An estimate for works required following the annual inspection is awaited. Some Heras fencing will be erected around one item ASAP.
 - 23.2 Any other matters: The annual Fire Risk Assessment is booked for early March. The portable toilet will be ordered for the Easter holidays and stay in place until the autumn, as in previous years. Petanque will be discussed again at a future meeting. Cllr. Sarah Leppard is hoping to receive suggestions regarding improvements to the site in respect of additional equipment
24. **Reports.**
 - 24.1 The Chairman: The Vice-Chairman reported on behalf of the Chairman and Culmstock Village Hall Committee - following a recent fundraiser attended by 95 people, £1800 had been raised for the village hall.
 - 24.2 The Clerk. (i) Notification of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan Review Workshop on 28/02/24 - Cllr. Dr Bass to attend. (ii) A date of 02/03 has been agreed for SWAST to provide a resuscitation and defibrillator awareness session in the village hall; refreshments will be arranged.
 - 24.3 P3/Footpaths and/or Access. (i) Final details are awaited regarding the Mid Devon Walking Festival in September. (ii) A report had been received from the P3 coordinator: FP4 - the planned replacement of the gatepost at Southwood Farm was cancelled due to heavy rain & is planned for 16/02. FP22 - the plan is for a small amount of re-profiling to the edge of the lane over Whiteball Hill; to avoid the pond that has formed, the path currently being very wet and muddy. FP12A - footbridge crossing the river from Silver Street cleared of brambles and nettles. One of the pillars has started to erode which will be monitored. FP21 - the culvert at the bottom of the lane on the Craddock road needs clearing after every storm, with the road drain sumps. This is to slow the erosion of the culvert sides.
 - 24.4 Highways: See 25.3.
 - 24.5 Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors. (i) A date of 20/03 has been agreed for the MDDC State of the District Debate 2023/24.

Reports continued - (ii) DCC Cllr. Radford - a report had been circulated to all. The budget will be agreed shortly. Councillors' Locality Budget is reopened. Council Tax – County Councils in England may increase council tax for 2024/25 by up to the referendum limit at 2.99% and social care authorities may also increase the tax rate by up to a further 2% specifically to fund adult social care costs, and therefore raise council tax by up to 4.99% overall without a referendum being required. Impact of winter so far - this winter season has been relatively kind to the highway asset with only 24 days where the temperature has dipped below zero and a low of minus 7.3°. At the same point in 2023 there had been 38 days and a minimum temperature of minus 9.4°. This has led to a reduction in gritting treatments which has been below the 5-year average for November, December and January. Up to the end of March 4,700t of salt has been spread compared with 11,700t at the same point in 2023. Asset Management and the Network Response teams have worked very closely together to prepare for the winter season. The service has recorded 5,500 safety defect potholes in January, whilst this is slightly below the 7 year average (5,926) it compares well to the 7,500 in 2023. Reduced gritting operations frees up resources to continue the planned patching operations, again helping to reduce safety defect potholes across the county.

(iii) MDDC Cllr Clist - a balanced budget is to be produced. The recycling rate is 60% which is one of the best in Devon. The NPPF was published in December. 500 affordable homes may be built within the next five years. A Devolution Deal for Devon - proposals to create a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), which will be responsible for the delivery, implementation and oversight of the proposed Devolution Deal for Devon.

25. Highways.

25.1 Blackdown Hills Parishes Network – a questionnaire regarding any concerns in respect of speeding in Parishes has been received; Cllr. Dr Bass to respond.

25.2 Any other matters: The Clerk reported that a date is awaited for the recently appointed NHO to visit the Parish to look at a few issues; Cllr. Dr Bass hopes to meet on site. A further meeting may be arranged for councillors and the Clerk to meet the NHO.

26. Finance. DCC Cllr. Radford left the meeting.

26.1 Finance report: The bank balance was noted as £46,202.11 as at 31/01/24.

26.2 Payments were resolved:

-Chq 1889 £ 19.94 SMA Services. Payroll provider.

-Chq 1890 £ 820.80 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Maintenance contract.

-Chq 1891 £ 865.83 Clerk - salary & expenses.

-Chq 1892 £ 152.57 Parish warden - salary & expenses.

-Chq 1893 £ 8.70 Devon Association of Local Councils. Office Expenses.

-Chq 1894 £ 90.00 Kentisbeare Village Hall. Office - annual storage hire fee.

-Chq 1895 £ 18.00 Culmstock Village Hall. Room hire.

Noted cheque number 1895 listed with a typing error on the agenda; the correct amount is £18.00.

-Chq 1896 £ 15.25 C Bass. Expenses. *See declarations.*

26.3 Audit 2023/24 & Review of effectiveness of system of internal control: Agreed that arrangements in place are satisfactory.

26.4 Any other financial matters: The Clerk reminded councillors to submit any expenses not already claimed for within this financial year at the next meeting.

27. Culmstock Cemetery: None.

28. MDDC Town and Parish Charter Review - circulated to all in advance of the meeting. Cllr. Dr Bass and the Clerk reported on the content which was noted. No amendments suggested - approved.

29. Annual Parish Meeting 2024: Deferred to the next meeting.

30. Correspondence & Any Consultations.

-BHPN newsletter, and the final Work Plan 2023 monitoring sheet.

-MDDC Survey, Share your views on rural services in Mid Devon: Following a discussion, the Clerk will respond on behalf of the Parish Council.

-MDDC consultation, Proposed changes to its Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy: Noted

31. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates - 13/03, 10/04. Collier's bridge project (March 2024 agenda). Petanque. Apologies from Cllr. Mrs Balchin for 13/03/24.