

## CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs. Mrs L Jones (Chairman), Mrs J Zebedee, Dr C Bass, C Kay, Sarah Leppard, Mrs R Balchin, T Platel, Mrs J Saunders and the Clerk. MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw was present from agenda item 8.5. One member of the public was present for part of the meeting (leaving at minute 39.3). Elizabeth McNabb, Manager of the Blackdown Support Group (BSG) was present to speak to the council at the start of the meeting (leaving at minute reference 42).

- 31.** Democratic Period: Elizabeth McNabb gave details of the Blackdown Support Group which is based in Hemyock. The charity was formed around 30 years ago and aims to connect local people to their local communities, to alleviate isolation and loneliness and to support the good health and well-being of local residents. Services are led by around 80 Volunteers from across the Blackdown Hills and overseen by a board of volunteer trustees who all live locally. The trustees are actively involved in service delivery and governance. Anyone resident of any age in the area is eligible to utilise the services and ask for support. Over the last year BSG supported 350 users with transport services and over 150 users with other services. The charity has recently moved to a larger premises and renovation works are ongoing with other projects to progress. Local Parish Councils are being asked to consider grant funding. Culmstock Parish Council has provided grants in previous years - a grant of £200 was provided in 2022-23. Cllr. Miss Jones suggested a grant of £500 for 2025-26; this will be considered at a future meeting. Councillors agreed that the charity is of great benefit.
- 32.** Apologies: Cllr. James Bartlett, DCC Cllr. R Radford and MDDC Cllr. S Clist.
- 33.** Declarations of Interest: None.
- 34.** The Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 12/02/25 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
- 35.** Matters Arising: None.
- 36 Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
- 36.1** Applications considered:  
-24/01631/LB Listed Building Consent for the rethatching of roof with water reed.  
Barton Lands, Culmstock, EX15 3JX. No objections.
- 36.2** Results from Mid Devon District Council.
- 36.3** Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan Consultation – notification of extension for Parish Councils to 19/03/25. Cllr. Dr Bass will submit a response.
- 36.4** Consultation: Mid Devon Call for Sites 2025. Noted as per the last meeting - no further comments.
- 36.5** Any other Planning Matters: For information only - notification just received of the following application which will be placed on the next agenda - 25/00346/PIP Permission in Principle for a phased development of between 3 and 9 Custom and Self Build dwellings. Land at NGR 310051 113426 North of Uffculme Road, Culmstock. *The Clerk has requested an extension on the time for response.*
- 37. Reports.**
- 37.1** The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None.
- 37.2** The Clerk: Devon Communities Together will present a session on Emergency Planning in Kentisbeare Village Hall in May; further details will follow. The Clerk will join an online meeting shortly with the Devon Association of Local Councils who will provide an update on Devolution.
- 37.3** P3/Footpaths and/or Access; The Clerk will submit the finance forms to DCC. A report had been submitted by the P3 Co-ordinator: FP10-a broken waymark post has been replaced on the path to Axon Farm. FP9-the bottom hinge on gate to lane has been changed & the gate now self closes again. FP12A-vegetation trimmed along fenced section, and debris in lane cleared to aid drainage. FP21-fallen & low branches from lane to Northcott cut up and cleared. FP1A-replaced 2 broken boards on boardwalk below the beacon; possibly caused by Hunt followers as seen in the area and damaged seems to be hoof damage. FP1-a return spring fitted to the metal gate to regain the self-close ability, also some stone and gravel to the depressions beside them, more is required. FP3A-repairs to the stile fence at entrance to wood and Owleycombe Common. FP10A-a waymarked post has been placed at the start of the short path to Maidendown Common. FP11- Stoggy Lane, news awaited on the clearing of the debris/mud.

- 37.4** Highways: Notices of upcoming road closures will be publicised.
- 37.5** Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors. (i) DCC Cllr Radford submitted a report re-iterating what had been reported last month regarding the budget - to enable the authority to set a balanced budget, savings, alternative funding and additional income of £21.7 million have been identified. During the year ahead, the council will continue to make savings by reducing costs, maximising the value of commissioned services and streamlining staff structures. However, it is inevitable that changes will have an impact on some of the vital services for which the council is responsible. The Strategic Leadership Team remains wholly committed to advising and supporting the council so that it can set a budget for 2025/26 that is in the best interests of the people of Devon. (ii) MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw reported that a joint statement regarding concerns over the prospect of Devolution will be submitted to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution by the deadline of 21/03 with a full proposal to government in November. Locally - there is to be a trial of recycling pots and pans.
- 38. Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.**
- 38.1** Improvements to the site: Update on installation and base for Table Tennis Table - The Clerk reported that a site survey would be required to confirm costs. Some councillors will meet on site to decide where to position the table.
- 38.2** Compost Toilet: Update following last meeting & to agree whether or not to proceed - It was agreed to proceed with the purchase of a compost toilet. Cllr. Sarah Leppard reported that further details are awaited from a possible potential supplier, quotations are awaited. A site visit will determine the most suitable place - a report will be given at the next meeting. The portable toilet will be ordered from Eagle Plant in time for the Easter holidays as in previous years.
- 38.3** Any other matter: A date for start of works to the Petanque piste is awaited, this will follow after confirmation of the Non-Material Amendment from MDDC.
- 39. Finance.**
- 39.1** A report was given and the balance was noted as at 28/02/25 as £50,094.62.  
Credits received: Cemetery Fees - 05/02, £600 & 17/02, £200, DCC P3 footpath grant - 19/02, £400.  
Direct Debits taken: Nest - 05/02, £115.58, Pennon Water Services - 10/02, £17.54.
- 39.2** The following payments were resolved:
- Chq 2032 £ 910.60 Clerk - salary & expenses, including £8.98 re-imburement for P3 expenses (re: M Barrow P3 Co-ordinator).
  - Chq 2033 £ 162.87 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
  - Chq 2034 £ 21.94 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
- Note: typing error on the agenda regarding chq's 2035, 2036 & 2038 - correct as below:*
- Chq 2035 £ 54.00 Culmstock Village Hall. Room hire.
  - Chq 2036 £ 858.43 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
  - Chq 2037 £ 216.00 MDC Exports Ltd. Eco bag replacements.
  - Chq 2038 - Spoilt cheque, cancelled internally.
  - Chq 2039 £ 840.00 Ken White Signs. Signs - play area and permissive path.
- Direct transfer to be arranged - £424.20 to Royal Mail re: annual fee for P O Box.
- 39.3** Online banking arrangements for payments: Cllrs. Mrs Zebedee, Miss Jones and the Clerk all now have devices for online banking. It was agreed for Cllr. Mrs Zebedee and the Clerk to set up and approve payment to Royal Mail for £424.40 following the meeting (see 10.2 payments) and to set up and approve payments online following future meetings until further notice. *The parishioner left the meeting.*
- 39.4** Renewal of Grounds Maintenance Contract: It was agreed to take this item at the end of the meeting, subsequently it was deferred to the next meeting.
- 39.5** Annual Review of Fixed Asset Register - reviewed and agreed.
- 39.6** Vision ICT: Renewal of Annual Support Contract - an invoice will follow for annual support for the Clerk.
- 39.7** Clerk's Laptop: It was agreed for the Clerk to look into a replacement laptop as the existing laptop was purchased 10 or so years ago. The Clerk requested an up-to-date laptop of equivalent spec which was agreed.
- 39.8** Any other financial matters: Two of the benches on order are due to be installed this week via Countrywide Construction as previously agreed. The third bench is for the proposed community orchard and the contractor will keep this on site until further notice.

40. **The Culmstock News:** Future funding - Cllr. Dr Bass & Mrs Zebedee reported that the editor has now resigned after five years and that they will assist the printers with production until a replacement editor is in place. Following the last meeting (minute 27) it was agreed that the Parish Council will fund £1500 towards the printing costs. Funds will be sent to The Culmstock News early in the next financial year.
41. **Culmstock Cemetery.** (i) Cemetery Hedge - Cllr. Mrs Zebedee will meet on site with Countrywide Grounds Maintenance regarding works to the roadside hedge and any other works that may be required to the other hedges. A quotation will be requested. (ii) Any other matters: Details are awaited from MDDC regarding the supply of a brown garden bin. *The Manager of BSG left the meeting.*
42. **Hillmoor Common:** (i) Cllr. Sarah Leppard reported on the cost of 7 trees at approximately £96 which was agreed. These will be planted shortly. (ii) The Clerk reported via the P3 co-ordinator that a tree may be in need of attention - a photo will be requested.
43. **Annual Parish Meeting (APM):** The APM will take place before the annual Parish Council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May.
44. **MDDC Resilience** - mobile phone not spots. MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw will prepare information for The Culmstock News following communication from the Resilience Officer at MDDC who is looking to understand where local communities have “not spots” before phones go fully digital and if community support may be needed. People will be asked to report of any areas in the Parish where lack of mobile phone coverage could cause an issue for public safety (e.g. contacting emergency services). This is because when dialling a 999 emergency call, if there is any mobile service it will redirect you through the nearest signal tower regardless of provider. Because of this, even when it seems that there is no signal, emergency services can still be contacted. However if there are places that have no signal from any provider, this may be a ‘not spot’ and concern and awareness may need to be raised of support needed for vulnerable people.
45. **VE Day - possible celebrations. Cllr. Mrs Zebedee.** Discussed - no further action from the Parish Council.
46. **Correspondence & Any Consultations: Correspondence** - Clerks and Councils Direct. Elan City – road safety solutions. Children’s Hospice South West posters. Open Spaces Society Spring 2025. Natural England Natural Capital & Ecosystem Assessment - letter of thanks & Field Studies Council pamphlet following survey. Various generic emails (circulated to all).  
Correspondence for discussion - Family Farms and IHT; a Discussion Paper circulated to Parishes within the Blackdown Hills. To suggest comments: Cllr. Bartlett - this was not discussed due to apologies received from Cllr. Bartlett.  
**Consultations:** Reminder - Fire service consultation- Automatic Fire Alarms.
47. **Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates.** Next meeting: 09/04/25.