

## WASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

**The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 22nd January 2025 in Washfield Memorial Hall at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** Cllr's Mrs A Taylor-Ross, M Balment, J Boundy, J Mock, R Webber and W Wood.

**In attendance:** County Cllr R Chesterton, District Cllr C Adcock, Mr & Mrs Roberts (Footpath Wardens), two members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe

**57/01/25. To receive apologies.** Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs Wych.

**58/01/25. Disclosure of interest in item on the agenda.** No declarations of interest.

**59/01/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2024 as an accurate record of the meeting.** The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chair.

**60/01/25. Matters arising from the minutes (not already covered by the agenda).** No matters arising.

**61/01/25. Public questions.** A member of the public explained that a triangle of land by the Church is used as a turning circle by parishioners but pots have been placed on it, making turning difficult. It was also felt the pots are unsightly. The member of the public has found several maps of varying ages in his efforts to confirm the person putting the pots on this area is not it's owner and these have been shared with the Parish Council. He said DCC Highways need to be asked to clarify if they own this triangle of land. If they do not own it, and it is not known who does, perhaps the Parish Council could take it on. Cllr Wood declared an interest because his mother is the person who has put the pots on this piece of land. The reason she has done this is because people are parking here and blocking the entrance to her field which she needs to have access to in order to check and feed her livestock. It was suggested that 'No parking' signs could be put on the Church wall and the field gate. If the access to the gate wasn't being blocked there would be no need for the pots to be on the verge and they could be removed.

An item will be added to the agenda for the March meeting for an update.

A member of the public said he understood it's agreed that the second part of Mousebeare Lane is public i.e. not owned by the landowners either side and could now revert to its original and historic status as a public highway. How that is achieved will, he was sure, be subject to friendly and neighbourly discussion. The advice in an email from Tania Weeks, Public Rights of Way Officer - Definitive Map Researcher for Mid Devon, is that there is no known owner.

A member of the public has been researching historic maps and other documents and he believes the path on the right-hand side was put in place in the 1950's. Cllr Wood said it was not on the definitive map and was not the responsibility of either Public Rights of Way or the landowners. He declared an interest as his mother is a Landowner on part of the path. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross suggested keeping the path as it was with people walking down the gully. The bottom half of the path is very overgrown and the landowner at that end has told Stuart Howell, DCC Public Rights

of Way Warden, that he doesn't want it opened up. It is steep to walk on that path: the other path is easier. Cllr Wood said if people wanted to use the overgrown path they could. Cllr Chesterton agreed to talk to Tania Weeks to get clarification about ownership and pointed out that the aim is to get people from the village using the Rights of Way in the parish.

One member of the public left the meeting.

It was agreed to bring the following item forward on the agenda.

## **62/01/25. Reports**

**a) County Cllr.** A written report was circulated by email prior to the meeting. Airband is pulling out of their contract with Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) which will affect the Washfield, Stoodleigh and Cove parts of Cllr Chesterton's Tiverton West Division. Cove is part of Tiverton Town Council. Possibilities for reinstating the voucher scheme that was in place before CDS gave the contract to Airband are being looked into and this might need a local initiative. A scheme could be fast tracked rather than waiting for another provider. Cllr Chesterton will arrange for a representative from CDS to come and talk to the parishes involved. Washfield Parish Council agreed to host the meeting. The only alternative at present is Starlink which is more expensive. The Government have talked about retiring the UK's traditional phone service at the end of 2025 but Cllr Chesterton didn't think they would be able to do this if broadband hasn't been provided. Of all the Government funded schemes Fibre to the Property is what has worked, He hasn't heard of another suggestion.

Referring to the section on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution in his report Cllr Chesterton explained that generally it wouldn't affect Parish Councils. Some might decide to take on more responsibilities.

Cllr Boundy asked what the advantage of becoming a unitary was. It was explained that it is not the choice of either DCC or the district councils: it is being pushed by Government as they claim it will save money. The timetable is very tight, on the 16th of December the government announced a white paper on Local Government Reorganisation and DCC had to say by 10<sup>th</sup> January whether they were willing to engage with Government on this process or whether they would fight it. The Council decided it was willing to be a priority as it would get better funding. If they had decided to fight they had been told they would get less funding.

There might be two or more unitary authorities in Devon as Exeter and Plymouth want to go on their own. The Government wants unitary authorities to have a population of at least 500,000. District Councils will go. The Government would like a Mayoral area of Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. The Police and Crime Commissioner role would go.

The Government will announce this week or next week which areas will be priority areas and their elections will be postponed until next year. Cllr Wood asked if a Regional Mayor would get more power, like Andy Burnham in Manchester. Cllr Chesterton didn't know how it would work in a rural area; it is early days.

Cllr Adcock noted the shortage of time to discuss the proposal and have conversations. Time for councils to talk needs to be built into the timetable running up to March. He said councillors would be further away and have a bigger area to

cover. There will be 4,000 to 5,000 less councillors in the country at the end of this process. Town and Parish Councils will have the chance to take on more responsibility.

It was noted that social care budget is really tight and almost unaffordable. Councillors queried the number of potholes that were claimed to have been repaired and Cllr Chesterton explained this figure was across the county. Representatives of Washfield Parish Council will meet with Cllr Chesterton and Melanie Mckenna, DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer on 26<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the condition of the roads in the parish and any other highways responsibilities. Prior to the meeting she will drive every road in the parish. Most of the gullies and ditches are contracted to be cleaned this year. She will bring maps of the parish marked with the schemes she has planned and made funding bids for. The Parish Council will be given the opportunity at their next meeting to prioritise the schemes marked on the map to make the best use of the money involved. She has made a lot of funding bids for Tiverton West but will not get all the money at once. Parishioners will be encouraged to report all faults online to highways using the online reporting page on the DCC website. Cllr Chesterton stressed this is the Parish Council's meeting as much as DCC's. He asked the Clerk to contact Melanie at least a week prior to the meeting if there is anything she needs to be made aware of.

Cllr Chesterton left the meeting.

**b) District Cllr.** A written report had been circulated by email prior to the meeting. Cllr Balment asked if devolution would change the way that MDDC worked with the parishes. Cllr Adcock said it wouldn't in the short term as there will be transitional arrangements.

Councillors felt the listing on the Community Risk Register was utterly bizarre. The risk of bins overflowing was listed as 8, the same as the risk of children getting run over.

Cllr Balment asked what the Community Risk Register was going towards. The plan has been circulated by MDDC's Resilience Officer who is building a plan for the district. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross has prepared a draft response.

### **63/01/25. Footpaths:**

**a) P3 Report.** The P3 Report from Mr & Mrs Roberts was circulated by email prior to the meeting. Stuart Howell is going to arrange for the wobbly gate post on Footpath 2 to be repaired and work planned for Footpath 9 is in hand. The gate on the bridleway to Ramstorland is in place and is useful. An improvement they would like to see is steps and/or a handrail up the bank where FP6 (from Slade) crosses into the field below Smiths Farm. The walkway on the Slade side of the hedge and the two stiles are in good condition but they have difficulty with the bank on the Smiths Farm side. Landowners need to be reminded to mark footpaths that run across their fields before they sow crops in them, particularly on Footpath 1. The Parish Council will ask Stuart Howell to arrange for the footpaths DCC pay to be cut back annually to be strimmed before the school summer holidays. He will be asked for a response to this request.

Mr and Mrs Roberts were thanked for all they do and their family was thanked for helping to walk and check the paths.

**b) Any other footpaths matters.** No other footpath matters.

Mr & Mrs Roberts left the meeting.

#### **64/01/25. Planning**

**a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received before the meeting.** No applications received.

**b) Planning applications received between meetings.**

**24/01617/FULL** Erection of replacement dwelling following demolition of an agricultural building utilising the Class Q fallback position 23/01940/PNCOU. Location: Land and Building at NGR 293995 118318 (West of Stoodleigh Drive & West Emmerford Cross). Comment: no objection.

**24/01633/FULL** Erection of 2 'self build' dwellings and associated works following demolition agricultural buildings utilising the Class Q fallback position. Location: Slade Farm, Washfield. Comment: no objections.

**24/01729/HOUSE** 24/01729/House Erection of single storey extension to South West elevation, conversion of workshop to guest accommodation and alterations to landscape to improve parking and ventilation of dwelling. Location: Beeches, Washfield. Comment: no objections.

**c) To note any decisions on planning applications made by MDDC.**

**24/01652/FULL** Erection of an agricultural building to provide covered yard (628 sq mts). Location: Stanterton Farm, Washfield. Decision: conditional approval granted.

**24/01653/FULL** Erection of an agricultural building to provide covered yard (911 sq mts). Location: Stanterton Farm, Washfield. Decision: conditional approval granted

**24/01654/FULL** Erection of an agricultural building to provide covered yard (206 sq mts). Location: Stanterton Farm, Washfield. Decision: conditional approval granted

**d) Any other planning matters.** It was noted that the Parish Council is not consulted on Class Q planning applications.

#### **65/01/25. Highways**

**a) To report on any highways work carried out in the parish and to note any highways work needed.** Cllr Boundy and Cllr Webber have been checking the roads in the parish in preparation for the meeting with Cllr Chesterton and Melanie Mckenna and have a long list of points to raise.

Long Lane really needs some work. Visibility at the junction of Washfield Lane with Packer Close is often blocked by vehicles parking on the junction. This road is yet to be adopted by Highways and Councillors will ask for the priority on the junction to be changed.

Before the meeting parishioners will be asked if there are any issues they would like to be raised at the meeting and they will be encouraged to report everything online The blocked drain at Badcott has been unblocked by parishioners. There is still a drain to be unblocked at Courtney.

**b) To agree a date to meet with Cllr Chesterton and Melanie Mckenna, DCC**

**Neighbourhood Highways Officer, to discuss highways issues in the parish.**

The meeting has been arranged for 26<sup>th</sup> February at 1.30pm.

**c) Any other highways matters.** No other highways matters.

**66/01/25. Finance:**

**a) To approve any payments.** It was resolved to make the following payments:

Washfield Memorial Hall - £75.00 room hire (Payment ref: 2425/12)

Mrs J Larcombe - £94.92 Clerk's salary (Payment ref: 2425/13)

HM Revenue & Customs - £23.80 PAYE (Payment ref: 2425/14)

Cllr Balment declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following payment as he is paid to cut the grass in the Churchyard. He left the room while the payment was agreed. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross declared a personal interest as a member of the PCC.

Washfield PCC - £550.00 Churchyard Grant 2024-25 (Payment ref: 2425/15)

Bank fees of £6.00 were paid on 30/11/24 and 31/12/24.

An internal transfer will be made between the Current Account and the Instant Access Account to return the Current Account balance to £500.00.

**b) To report any receipts and the bank balances.** Bank interest of £13.47 has been received since the last meeting.

Unity Trust Bank Current Account balance is £1,282.97

Unity Trust Bank Instant Access balance - £2,024.17

NatWest Current Account - £0.00

Savings account - £293.10

**c) Bank reconciliations.** The bank reconciliations were noted.

**d) To compare budget v actual April – December 2024.** Figures were included in the report for the budget for 2025-26 and were noted. Predictions for the position at the end of 2024-25 were also included in the report. The figures were noted and there were no concerns.

**e) To agree the budget for 2025-26.** A draft budget was circulated prior to the meeting and following discussion it was approved.

**f) To agree the precept for 2025-26.** It was agreed to request a budget of £2,300.00.

**g) Request for funding from CHAT.** It was resolved to give a grant of £50.00 to Chat (Payment ref: 2425/16) and £50.00 to the Exe Valley Market Bus (Payment ref: 2425/17).

**67/01/25. MDDC Community Risk Register.** Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross had prepared and circulated a draft response.

Regarding the Communities Risk Register I am surprised there seems to be no logical methodology to the list, splitting the many risks into sectors or geographical areas. I am also surprised to see the mix of very specific risks alongside general risks that will affect Devon communities as a whole. I may have missed earlier communication about this, I apologise.

I would certainly not count overflowing litter bins as the same risk of flood, typhoons or other natural disasters and school traffic and a child being hit – all of these have a total of 8 and yet the impact is enormously different and the resources allocated to reduce the risk completely different in scale. It would help to understand the context and also the reason this list have been compiled and what it will be used for.

I would suggest it preferable to put highly localised hazards in a sub-section under general categories of risk eg traffic, extreme climate emergencies, village facilities,

utilities, communications, vulnerable people, access to villages etc. It also seems to be a scatter gun approach with no methodology – items included are ones you have been sent by pro-active councils as opposed to including risks which would affect all but haven't been included in the list eg another pandemic, cyber-security breach closing down local school or council or business networks or banking etc.

From our point of view in Washfield Village, and these are by no means the only hazards, but if you are wanting the hazards that affect health, life, living and the local economy I would like to see included:

- Internet connectivity – vital for local businesses, working from home, homes schooling, vulnerable and isolated, the elderly, day to day living including banking and access to NHS
- Emergency services access – delays in 999 call out responses, A&E waiting times,
- Medical care - waiting times for Drs appointments and follow up, access to NHS dentists, access to social care at home
- Extreme weather events – wind, flood, snow, storms and fire
- Power outage
- Pandemic – human (eg Covid) and animal (eg Foot and Mouth or Bird Flu)
- Access to local face to face banking – closure of banks in Tiverton and no hubs on the horizon
- Isolated elderly – support to village initiatives which strengthen networks for short and long term eg tea in the hall, lunch club, the local market bus
- Communications – analogue solution to communication in case of power outage / internet failure, access to local news latest updates when mobile phones fail , cascade system for passage of information
- Cyber security breach – what should residents do if local services are breached, national databases accessed, home computers compromised, supermarket checkouts fail, cash machines stop etc

**68/01/25. Broadband connectivity in Washfield.** This was covered under item 62/01/25 a).

**69/01/25. Government consultation on strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local councils.** ([Details](#)). Noted.

**70/01/25. Plans for the Parish Meeting on February 25<sup>th</sup>.** The theme will be 'Farming in the Washfield Environment' and will start at 6pm. The NFU has agreed to provide someone to speak on what farmers are doing for the environment. There will also be an update on Wild Washfield. Councillors from Bampton, Stoodleigh, Oakford and Templeton and anyone else with an interest in the environment and sustainability will be invited. The bar will open at 8pm. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross will advertise the meeting locally.

The Clerk gave her apologies as she was already committed to attending 2 meetings that evening when this one was planned.

**71/01/25. To discuss how the Parish Council can improve how it works.** Prior to the meeting Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross had circulated a report with her ideas on how councillors could take on more responsibility and lessen her workload as Chair. Her expectation of the role of the Chair has created more work than she can manage

in an already busy life and she has considered standing down. The Clerk had also circulated information on the roles and responsibilities of the Chair, Clerk and Councillors. Many parishioners do not understand what the role of a Parish Council Chair is and they are not aware that they should be contacting the Clerk rather than the Chair if they would like to raise something with the Parish Council. There was concern that councillors often do not respond to emails circulated by the Chair and Clerk but not all councillors regularly use email and some would find it helpful to receive a text. Following discussion on sharing the workload, it was agreed that Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross would ask the Councillors or Clerk for help when she needs it. Parishioners need to be encouraged to contact the Clerk if they want to raise something at a Parish Council meeting or have some other concern.

**72/01/25. Chair's Announcements and Correspondence.** There was no further correspondence.

**73/01/25. Date of the next meeting.** The next meeting will be on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Signed:  
Chair

Date: