

Minutes of the Ordinary Cutcombe Parish Council Meeting held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 14 September 2021 at the Moorland Hall

Present: Councillors Vivian White (*Chair*), John Anson, John Davis, Eric Norman, Claire Rooke. Clerk Jeanna Grenville. One member of the public was present.

Apologies: Councillors Davis and Nicholson due to conflicting appointments, Cllr Pugsley for personal reasons.

21/54 Public Question Time: The member of the public noted that the recent cut of the field left it covered in long grass requiring a parishioner to clear it using his own machinery. It was reported that a visiting team had refused to play due to the condition of the grass. The Clerk advised that a number of issues remain to be resolved with the contractor, including the scheduling of cuts and costs.

21/55 Declarations of Interest: Cllr Norman for agenda item 9 vii) as supplier of the service.

21/56 Minutes of previous meetings and report on actions: The minutes of the previous meeting of 20 July 2021 were approved as true and accurate records. Actions: 21/53 – there was no progress to report regarding the road markings on the Highway past the market.

21/57 Chairman's Report: The Chairman reported back on the visit to local Exmoor parishes by the new Police and Crime Commissioner, Mark Shelford who will also attend a meeting of the Exmoor Panel. There is a Community Action Fund available for communities to tackle local crime-related issues. The Chairman is planning to meet with the Exmoor National Park Authority CEO and tourism lead to gauge interest in continuing the annual Snowdrop Valley event to inform decision-making by the Parish Council (PC) regarding the future of this event.

21/58 Reports from County and District Councillors: Deferred until the next meeting.

21/59 Highways and Transport Matters: i) Meeting with Highways 8 September – Cllr Foxwell reported that a number of senior officials from Highways and the unitary transition team visited on a fact-finding mission regarding highways' issues affecting Cutcombe as a rural parish on the Moor. This will help inform the establishment of the Local Community Networks planned under the unitary authority. The erosion and water logging at Long Lane were noted as well as works to remediate the ongoing flooding at the market. Conditions at Heath Poul Cross were also inspected. Concerns including inaccurate and misleading signage, inadequate communications and the general deterioration of standards for highways and verges were articulated. There will be a further meeting in advance of the Local Community Network being set up. ii) Update on 20mph initiative – progress with Somerset West and Taunton is slow. Cllr Webber has calculated the number of roundels required. The PC confirmed that the 20 mph limit should be applied to all of the existing 30mph area. Cllr Norman has consulted with parishioners regarding cutting back their hedges to increase visibility for drivers. Cllrs Foxwell and Webber will survey the areas to see if they can undertake the work themselves using a mechanical trimmer and will report back to the next meeting.

21/60 Planning: Cllr Webber expressed disappointment that the retrospective application for the Firs had been supported by the PC at its previous meeting when he had been unable to attend.

21/61 Finance: i) Banking Update – the Clerk has continued to experience failings in service from the bank which have been time-consuming and stressful to deal with. A consolatory payment to cover petrol, parking and inconvenience of £129 has been awarded in response to the PC's complaint. Regular statements are still not being received by the Clerk, limiting financial control. Cllrs

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expressed their dissatisfaction; future banking arrangements will be considered once the current issues have been resolved. A number of Parishes are moving to Unity bank Trust which is an ethical online bank. ii) Feedback from Finance Working Group (FWG) – Cllr Webber reported on the items discussed when the group met on 8 September. There had been initial discussions over reserves, projects for the future - including Snowdrop Valley - and the precept, in advance of the 2022-23 budget-setting round. The update to the PC's Financial Regulations and its new Risk Policy and Register were also discussed. iii) Terms of Reference for the Finance and Risk Working Group - the FWG recommended new Terms of Reference (TOR) to include scrutiny of the PC's risks which was recognized as an important activity. After debating the potential to increase membership, the new TORs were resolved for the Finance and Risk Working Group (FRWG) as presented in the original motion. iv) Updated Financial Regulations – deferred until the November meeting. v) Progress against 2021 Audit Action Plan - actions to strengthen compliance remain ongoing and will be reported regularly to the PC. vi) Clerk's wages and reasonable expenses – Cllrs resolved to pay the sums identified in the schedule. vii) Schedule of Payments – Cllrs resolved the payments and noted receipts. The costs of cutting the Recreation Field remained under discussion. Countrywide have invoiced for maintenance work not formally authorised by the PC this year. Cllrs confirmed that only agreed works should be paid for. To ensure speedy payment, the Clerk was mandated to pay the fresh invoice when raised by Countrywide and report back to the next meeting. viii) Renewal of electricity contract – the Clerk was mandated to take out a new competitively-priced contract, liaising with the Char as necessary

- 21/62 Upgrade to PC Website:** The Clerk demonstrated two website options from Function 28 and Netwise, noting the comparative costs for building the website which varied from £770-£1,000 with additional costs for annual maintenance. At this early point the Function 28 option appeared preferable, being cost-effective and delivered by a Devon-based provider. The Clerk was also familiar with the process for updating the website. Councillors debated the benefit of combining the PC's website with one for the wider community or simply providing links to community information. It was agreed that this should be considered more widely and the Clerk will put a notice in the parish magazine / notice board inviting insights and collaboration.
- 21/63 Recreation Ground:** Cllr Norman reported receiving queries about ownership. It was reaffirmed that the recreation ground was held on charitable trusts for the parish by the Moorland Hall and Recreation charity. As an important parish amenity, widely available for public use by the community, it was acceptable for the PC to fund the grass cutting; these costs will be reviewed in the forthcoming budget-setting round.
- 21/64 New Risk Register:** Deferred to the November meeting, following consideration by the FWRG on 4 November.
- 21/65 Maintenance of Telephone Boxes:** Cllr Rooke had been unable to get an email response from BT and would now write to them enclosing pictures demonstrating the poor state of decoration.
- 21/66 War Memorial Bench:** Cllr Webber had repaired and made safe the existing bench. Cllrs debated whether a new commemorative bench would be a fitting tribute for 'the fallen'. Cllrs Norman and Anson agreed to measure the space available and bring costs to the next meeting.
- 21/67 Queen's Platinum Jubilee June 2022:** Cllrs noted the complex logistics of lighting a beacon as part of the national celebrations. Cllr Webber will approach the NT to discover if there are any local plans. This could be a matter for consultation with parishioners. A new Parish clock might provide a suitable commemoration for the Jubilee.
- 21/68 Correspondence and Meetings:** The Clerk had attended VAT training and would reclaim eligible

VAT. Concerns were being followed up about an overgrown hedge at Meadow Close, believed to belong to Magna, SWaT had asked for information about the location of gritting bins (none in the Parish). The Opening Up Safely grant scheme via SALC was open until the end of September. The Clerk had responded to the FOI request regarding a previous planning application. Cllr Anson noted that there would be a school visiting on 21 September for Duke of Edinburgh Award activities.

21/69 Items for Next Agenda: Affordable Housing – Clerk to invite the SWaT Affordable Housing co-ordinator. Bus Shelter. Noted budget will come to the November meeting allowing time for consultation with Parishioners.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10:15 pm

Signed

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