

**Draft Minutes
of the Meeting of
Yatton Parish Council
held on**

Monday 20 January 2025

At Hangstones Pavilion, Stowey Road, Yatton.

Meeting opened: 7.30 p.m. Meeting closed: 9.20 p.m.

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Edwards, Gordon Gibson, Graham Humphreys, Ann Hodgson, Steve Humphrey, Chris Jackson, Steve Lister, Peter Lomas, Jessie McArdle, Caroline Sheard and Bryan Thomas.

Also in attendance: Clerk, Megan Thurgur(Grounds Team) and District Councillor Wendy Griggs.

PRAYERS OR MOMENTS OF REFLECTION

MATTERS FOR DECISION

COU77/25: To receive apologies for absence, and to approve reasons where appropriate. Apologies have been received from Parish Councillors David Crossman, James Hooper, Robert Jenner and Roger Wood and District Councillor Steve Bridger.

COU78/25: To receive declarations of interests by Parish Councillors and to consider any written applications for dispensations.

NONE.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

COU79/25: Public participation.

North Somerset Councillors' Report.

District Councillor Wendy Griggs spoke about how very disappointed the Highways Officer at North Somerset Council was to have to delay the High Street work until February. It was a contractor issue that was beyond their control. She thanked those who attended the Batch appeal hearing. There had been a recent budget meeting and they have reached a balanced budget for 2025-26 but have used a lot of reserves. The Government will not help any Council that has reserves. She highlighted that the budget 2026-27 will be very challenging. There was a current consultation on 'transformation of services' which is looking at ways to meet that challenge.

District Councillor Steve Bridger had sent a report that had been circulated to all Councillors in advance of the meeting. The report gave updates on the High Street pedestrian safety improvement works commencement details, issues with the management companies at Chestnut Park and Strawberry Drive, the Batch appeal was pending the appeal decision, the new Sainsbury's on Arnolds Way work had commenced and was due to complete this summer. The two linked planning applications at the Rugby Club were approved in December. The new pitches will be laid in April and maybe ready for use next season. The construction on the residential site should commence later in the year. Bristol Airport were consulting on a new draft master plan for which a planning application was expected in the summer.

Police Report.
NONE.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

COU80/25: To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 11th November 2024.

The minutes of the meetings held on the 11th November 2024 were approved and were signed by the Chairman.

COU81/25: Exclusion of public:

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda items 12 and 13 on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business of competitive quotes.

COU82/25: To discuss the Citizens Advice North Somerset (CANS) outreach service in Yatton.

The Clerk had circulated a report drafted by Finance Committee Chairman Peter Lomas prior to the meeting. Councillor Peter Lomas led on this item and began by highlighting the history of the past arrangements with Citizens Advice North Somerset (CANS).

The Finance Committee had discussed the CANS grant in December and there were concerns expressed regarding how this arrangement fits within the Grant Awarding Policy because the service is only provided if it's paid for and this constitutes a commercial arrangement rather than a grant. The policy stipulates that grants will not be made to individuals or commercial organisations. The following resolution was made at that meeting:

RESOLVED: that a recommendation was made to Full Council in January 2025 that a grant was not provided to CAB.

The Committee highlighted that whilst this was their unanimous recommendation it only represented the view of a third of the Council and it was the correct procedure and fairer to take this for discussion and final decision to Full Council.

Councillor Lomas advised that there was sufficient in the grant budget to accommodate one of the smaller grant options that CANS had suggested should Full Council decide to reject the recommendation of the Finance Committee. He stressed that the lack of compliance with the grant policy which only came to light when the service was withdrawn was the primary reason for the recommendation that was made.

The Council discussed the CANS service and concluded as follows:

RESOLVED: to not provide a grant to CANS or any further budget provision in future.

COU83/25: To consider taking over the management of Horsecastle and Grange Farm play areas, the emptying of some NSC dog/litter bins and making a contribution for the non-statutory work carried out by North Somerset Council's Public Rights of Way Team.

The Clerk had circulated the minutes from the December 9th 2024 Finance, Personnel and Administration meeting to all Councillors. They gave a full explanation of what was being suggested for each element of play areas, Public Rights of Way (PROW) and the bins currently managed by North Somerset Council (NSC) in the Parish. Since that meeting further work had been carried out auditing the NSC bins.

A meeting had been held with North Somerset Council Officers 8th January to find out more information about the tenure and any costs in regard to the play areas. A request had been made that this information was supplied in time for this evenings meeting but nothing had been received. Chairman Chris Jackson advised the meeting that each of these areas would be discussed one at a time starting with play areas.

Horsecastle and Grange Farm Play Areas

Note: this refers to the part of each location within the play area fencing and not the open space the play area is within. NSC would like the Parish Council to commence management on 1st April 2025.

Chairman Chris Jackson advised that discussion should focus on the 'principle' of taking over managing the play areas with tenure and finance to be considered at a later date when the full details are known. Grounds Team member Megan Thurgur was invited to speak on the implications of taking over the maintenance of the two areas. She advised that the team had taken a detailed look at both play areas and gave the Council a comprehensive overview of all the work required including mowing and weekly inspections etc. The play equipment was in a poor condition at Grange Farm but Horsecastle was generally in good condition with around five minor repairs required. The inspection reports had been received from NSC but were limited in the information provided. She advised that the team would be able to take on the maintenance of these play areas.

Councillors discussed the areas and concluded that the Parish Council did not wish to witness the steady decline and eventual loss of these two play areas. They were highly valued assets of the community and if left in the hands of North Somerset Council would eventually be lost.

RESOLVED: to unanimously agree in 'principle' to taking over the management of the fenced play areas at Horsecastle and Grange Farm Road from North Somerset Council subject to legal and financial considerations.

Horsecastle and Grange Farm Road open spaces outside the play areas.

At the meeting held 8th January 2025 with which was convened to discuss the tenure and any potential costs NSC officers raised the future management of the open spaces surrounding the play areas. These are also being offered to the Parish Council though this had not been mentioned or discussed prior to this meeting. The tenure and costs for this were also to form part of the additional information NSC agreed to provide. Grounds Team member Megan Thurgur was invited to speak on the implications of taking over the maintenance of the two open spaces. She advised that the team had taken a detailed look at both open spaces and gave the Council a comprehensive overview of all the work required including hedges, tree work, various areas of shrubs especially on the boundaries at Horsecastle, grass mowing, inspections and ad hoc events that tend to happen on open spaces. The additional cost of fuel and wear on equipment was mentioned as Horsecastle was a large area. The team had drafted ideas for improvement and enhancement which could be winter projects. She advised that the team were at capacity within their current hours especially with the new cemetery and in order to accommodate the play areas and these open spaces one additional day a week was needed. Councillor Peter Lomas confirmed that the draft budget had allocated sufficient provision for a small increase in staff hours and remediation/replacement of some play area equipment. Councillors discussed the open spaces and concluded that the Parish Council wished to protect these open spaces which were highly valued assets of the community. It had been recognised within the Neighbourhood Plan that Yatton had a lack of green space by comparison to many other Parishes in North Somerset.

Chairman Chris Jackson asked the Council again to focus on the 'principle' of taking over managing the open spaces with tenure and finance to be considered at a later date when the full details are known.

RESOLVED: to unanimously agree in 'principle' to taking over the management of the open spaces at Horsecastle and Grange Farm Road from North Somerset Council subject to legal and financial considerations.

Public Rights of Way (PROW).

NSC has a PROW team of two staff. This will be reduced to one in 2025-26 without funding obtained to retain the second member of staff. Based on the length of PROW in our parish NSC had asked for funding of £1,500. The same request has been made for all parishes on the same basis. If the PROW team is reduced to one member it will have a significant impact on the service provided. We are unable to undertake the work carried out by the PROW team.

A concern had been raised by Avon Local Councils Association that it was not legal for parishes to contribute to a service that NSC has a statutory duty to provide. The response from NSC was that the second staff member will only carry out non-statutory parts of the PROW work. The £1,500 contribution had been accommodated within the draft budget.

Chairman Chris Jackson asked the Council again to focus on the 'principle' of making the contribution to retain the second member of staff. It was unknown at this stage, firstly, if it can overcome the legality issue and secondly whether enough parishes will contribute to make it viable.

Councillors discussed the financial contribution and legality issue. Councillor Peter Lomas had done some research on the PROW statutory obligations and found it difficult to know what would be non-statutory within them. The discussion concluded as follows:

RESOLVED: to unanimously agree in 'principle' to contribute £1,500 towards the retention of a second PROW team member subject to clarification on the legality of the contribution and further details of what was deemed non-statutory work.

North Somerset Council Litter and Dog Waste Bins.

NSC had provided a spreadsheet of all the waste and dog bins they were responsible for and that are deemed non-essential. All the bins were to be removed if the Parish Council did not take them over. The Grounds Team and Clerk had carried out an audit of the NSC waste and dog bins looking at those preferable for retention based on size, location to another bin etc. A number could be emptied by the Grounds Team and some others by a contractor (£5 per bin) and some will be removed. A second commercial bin at Hangstones would be required for the extra space needed for the bins the Grounds Team empty. A list of the bins that are proposed to be retained and emptied by the Parish Council had been circulated prior to the meeting. Most of the bins that will be removed are the small ones on the posts along the High Street. The audit and proposed outcomes had been sent to NSC before Christmas. There had not been a response to date.

The draft budget 2025-26 had allocated funds for the additional bins emptied by a contractor and for another commercial bin at Hangstones. The additional day of work by the Grounds Team mentioned under Open Spaces above was also accommodated in the draft budget and the additional bins emptied by the Grounds Team could be covered within this day, all subject to Parish Council approval.

Chairman Chris Jackson asked the Council again to focus on the 'principle' of taking over the management of the NSC bins detailed in the audit submitted to NSC. Councillors thanked the Clerk and Grounds Team very much for all the work that had been done on this under very short notice.

RESOLVED: to unanimously agree in 'principle' to managing the emptying of the bins being retained in the audit that had been submitted to NSC.

NOTE: the personnel issues of staffing would be on the agenda for the Finance, Personnel and Administration Committee meeting on 10th February 2025.

COU84/25: To consider the Parish Council's budget as recommended for approval by the Finance, Personnel and Administration Committee and to set the precept for 2025-26.

The Clerk had circulated the draft budget, notes, ear marked reserves statement a budget report and a table of precept percentage increases prior to the meeting. The Chairman of the Finance, Personnel and Administration Committee (FPAC) Councillor Peter Lomas was invited to lead this agenda item.

The draft budget presented for the Council's consideration had been worked on by the FPAC, Finance Officer and the Clerk and was recommended to Full Council following the meeting 9th December. At the time of that meeting the NSC precept information 2025-26 had not been received.

The Precept.

On receipt of this information Councillor Peter Lomas had prepared a report which tabled the percentage precept increases from 0% to 15% and this was circulated to members of the FPAC in early January. He highlighted that the precept formed 94% of the Parish Council's income with the remainder coming from hall and pitch hire, burials and allotments. In 2024-25 the precept was raised by 10% which gave an annual charge on a Band D property in the Parish of £91.03.

A consensus was sought from the FPAC members on their views of the precept for 2025-26 based on the percentage tables circulated. The difficulties around the uncertainty of what 2025-26 might present for the Parish Council given the previous agenda item and the inference that NSC would be seeking to transfer other facilities and services in 2026-27 generated a consensus of raising the precept by 15%. This would increase the annual charge for a Band D property in the Parish to £104.68 or £2.01 per week and generate a precept of £332,991. Councillor Peter Lomas highlighted that Parish Councils were not capped in the precept they can request, however, NSC were capped to a maximum of 5%.

Councillors discussed the precept and the points highlighted by the FPAC and Councillor Peter Lomas.

RESOLVED: unanimously approve a precept of £332,991 for 2025-26.

The Budget

Councillor Peter Lomas highlighted the following items and proposed the budget was accepted as drafted and recommended by the FPAC.

- The Government's increase in Employers National Insurance had meant an increase of £5,000 under 101/4002. The Parish Council was not able to gain any compensation for this.
- The Salaries had been increased to accommodate a 5% pay increase but this was an estimate. Any pay increases were never in advance of budget setting and often not until the autumn at the earliest.
- The Grant Budget had been increased from £55,000 to £57,000 in order to allow an increase to the Youth Club. After all the grants including those that apply every year accommodated under Other Grants 107/4701 there was a balance of £3,000 left unallocated.
- Allowances had been made for the items discussed under agenda item 7 including 252/4034 Litter Bin Emptying for a new commercial bin at Hangstones, 252/4035 Dog Bin Cleaning increased bins from NSC transfer of bins and 299/4937 Outdoor Equipment & Improvements for play equipment at Grange Farm Road/Horsecastle.
- All other budget headings had been flexed as deemed appropriate by staff and the FPAC.

Councillors discussed the draft budget and items highlighted above.

RESOLVED: unanimously approve the 2025-26 budget as drafted.

Ear Marked Reserves (EMR)

Councillor Peter Lomas had three recommendations regarding Ear Marked Reserves for the Council to consider. As the new cemetery development was being funded from CIL funds, EMR 321 £39,704 could be re-purposed. These were the three recommendations as follows:

- To increase EMR 315 Contingency Fund from £75,728.31 by £4,271.69 to £80,000 in line with the recommended three to six months expenditure to be kept in reserve.
- The remaining balance in EMR 321 of £35,423.31 be re-purposed and renamed Skatepark Fund.
- The grant awarded to Claverham Village Hall of £2,000 this year had not yet been drawn down by the Village Hall Committee. The £2,000 be placed in a new EMR to retain the grant for 2025-26, should it not be drawn by year end 31 March 2025, to allow time for the project to progress.

The Council discussed the recommendations.

RESOLVED: that the recommendations for the EMR's were approved without amendment as detailed above.

Chairman Chris Jackson thanked Councillor Peter Lomas, all the FPAC members, the Clerk and Finance Officer for all the work they had done on the budget.

COU85/25: Finance

The Clerk had circulated all finance papers including payments, receipts and petty cash prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED: to authorise payments, including to note receipts and petty cash payments for January 2025.

COU86/25: To receive a report on the High Street Improvements.

Chairman Chris Jackson reported that the road safety work was due to commence 3rd February and should be completed by the end of the month. There are two stretches of the road subject to closures: between Wemberham Lane and Kenn Moor Road and Cherry Grove and Well Lane. There will be some night closures from 8.00 pm till 6.00 pm. Chescombe Road will be closed at the junction with the High Street completely for one week. This has not been promoted either by the Parish Council or District Councillor Steve Bridger until closer to the time following the cancellation last time.

Councillor Jonathan Edwards asked if it could be highlighted to Highways Officers dealing with the scheme that the raised crossing by Barberry Farm Road which was only finished last year already has a pothole in it. It is very concerning that Phase One of the work is already deteriorating in such a short time and that this should be repaired in February while the other work is being carried out.

Councillor Chris Jackson also highlighted that the Highways Improvement Request for a controlled crossing outside Court De Wyck school in Claverham had been refused. Councillor James Hooper was still investigating the refusal in more detail.

COU87/25: To consider Auditing Solutions letter of engagement for auditing services 2025-26.

A letter of engagement had been circulated prior to the meeting. The external auditor required evidence that internal audit provision is reviewed by the Council and instructed annually prior to the next financial year.

RESOLVED: to appoint Auditing Solutions to carry out internal audit services for the Parish Council in 2025-26.

COU88/25: To consider the contract for emptying the dog waste bins in Yatton. Confidential Item.

The Clerk had approached three providers for quotes but one was unable to meet the deadline for providing costs. The Council discussed the quotes and information each provider had submitted.

RESOLVED: to accept the quote from Corporate Cleaning Services to provide dog and waste bin emptying for the next 18 months. The current provider was to be given notice of the 31st March 2025.

COU89/25: To consider quotes for a new noticeboard in Claverham. Confidential Item.

A grant from the Bristol Airport Community Fund had been applied for by Administration Assistant Lucy Kehoe. It had been successful awarding £1,000 towards a new noticeboard in Claverham. The previous board was in a poor condition but was vandalised and has been removed. There were two quotes for consideration.

RESOLVED: to approve the quote from Greenbarnes for a three bay recycled plastic noticeboard of £2,512.82 ex vat.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

COU90/25: Clerk's Report.

- i) A very sad approach had been made from a funeral director in Clevedon asking for permission for two tiny infants from the same family to be interred in Yatton Burial Ground. The Clerk wished to ask the Council's view on this because there was only about three spaces left in the children's area and the babies were not from the Parish. The Parish Council were happy for this to proceed providing one of the plots available was suitable for the family's requirements.
- ii) The new cemetery final surfacing work had been completed. The Grounds Team had planted all the boundary trees and hedging on three sides on the site. The front Hornbeam hedge was not planted and it had been found that a small section of the fence was in the wrong place. The contractor had been contacted about this. The up to date project costs were £137,500 with £9,087 of this being legal costs. On the basis that a quote obtained in March 2023 for all the surfacing, drainage and the wall alone had been priced £198,000 the Parish Council had achieved excellent value for the Parish. The work had been carried out almost exclusively by contractors from Yatton and Congresbury who had done a very high standard of work.
- iii) A New Cemetery Working Group meeting was needed soon to work on the remaining list of matters for completion of the project.
- iv) The Speed Activated Device (SID) had now been ordered though the approved grant from the Police had not yet been received. It had taken almost a year to gain permission from NSC for the locations we will be allowed to put the sign up. We have been told we are not allowed to put it on streetlights so posts maybe needed in certain locations. It is still work in progress.
- v) The Horticultural Society had sent thanks to the Parish Council for the help the staff had given them in getting the new planters into the precinct. Members present all agreed they looked really good and were an enhancement for the area.

COU91/25: Future agenda items.

The new proposed cemetery off Mendip Road.

Weight limit signs in the Parish.

Newsletter provision.

To consider other venues for some Council meetings.

High Street Improvements Report.

___/___/2025

Chairman