

MONKSILVER PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the quarterly Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 13th May 2024

at 8.30 p.m.in the EMN Hall, Monksilver

Present:

Mervyn Orchard-Lisle – Chairman

Andrew Howe – Vice-Chairman

MPC Councillors:

Lydia Appleton

Paul Appleton

Dan Cotterill

Christopher Hill

Somerset Councillor Christine Lawrence

In attendance Mary Jacobs (clerk).

- 1, **Apologies for absence** were received from Councillors John Stace. Cllr. Lawrence submitted apologies from Marcus Kravis. (Christine is attending the Monksilver PC and Marcus is attending the Dunster meeting.
- 2, **The minutes of the quarterly meeting** held on the 26th February 2024 were approved as correct and signed by the chairman.
3. **Somerset Council reports.**

Conservative Group briefing.

Suez waste collection contract. The Council's waste contractor, SUEZ, has disclosed figures showing significant annual losses on its £24M a year contract. It has made a number of contractual claims seeking adjustment to payment and while these are in dispute, without an increase in payments there is a risk that SUEZ may exit the contract, to limit its losses over the contract's remaining six years. A report to the Council's Executive Committee meeting recommends giving the Council's Chief Executive a mandate to broker a deal which would stop Suez exiting and as cost effective as possible.

From May 2024, where safe to do so, mowing routines across managed highway verges, open spaces, country parks and council property grounds will be reduced, although safety and visibility around verges and public spaces such as play areas will be cut more regularly. On wider verges, only a one-meter swathe is mowed, leaving the rest untouched to maintain biodiversity.

Somerset Council has announced revised bus fares for the Taunton Town Zone to keep services sustainable. From 1st June this will be £1.50 for any adult single fare and 80p for a child. Across the rest of the county the cost of any single fare will stay at £2 until December 2024.

Childrens' and young peoples' plan (CYPP) for Somerset sets out the Council's aims for 2024-2030 including how services and communities are accountable for children and young people and how they will work together to ensure the ambitions of the plan.

No report was received from the Liberal Democrats.

4. **Matters arising.**

Mervyn confirmed that Marcus had invited questions to be submitted to him at the February meeting, following the discussion on devolution. Despite being reminded, MPC has not received an acknowledgement from Marcus. Christine responded that he possibly is not in a position to get answers to the questions, as Somerset Council is still restructuring and knowing who to go to get direct answers is difficult.

5. **Notley Arms** community asset renewal. Mervyn has signed the application and it has been submitted to Somerset Council Asset Management. The form stated that an acknowledgement will be received within three working days and a decision reached within 8 weeks. However, to-date no acknowledgement has been received. Mervyn will forward a copy of the application to Christine; she stated she would make enquiries on MPC's behalf. Once the acknowledgement has been received from Somerset Council, Mervyn will update Caroline and Simon on the progress.

6. **Local community network meeting** 30th April 2024. Christine and Mervyn had both attended the meeting and Mervyn had previously circulated an update to councillors.

7. **Cabinet Office and External audit best practice** .gov domain and email addresses. Mary has recently attended a workshop on .gov domains at the request of P.K. Littlejohn, external auditors. It has been widely reported that this is mandatory, but **it** is only best practice. Mary informed the councillors they should always be working to best practice. Whilst there is a grant to cover most of the conversion to a .gov domain, there will be ongoing administrative costs of approximately £120 per year. As MPC has recently invested in a new website, hosted by Black Cat and as the councillors all have email addresses which will be published, it was decided not to proceed. This was a unanimous decision. Mary will advise the auditors accordingly.

8. **Payments to be approved** and cheques signed:

- Zurich Municipal – insurance premium renewal. No increase on 2023 premium £112.
- West Somerset Flood Group – contribution to website. No increase on 2023. £5.
- D. Sykes (Black Cat) hosting fee + upload. £5 increase on 2023. £175.

The payments were approved and the cheques signed by Mervyn and Andrew.

Andrew expressed concern that NatWest had linked the MPC account to his online accounts. Mary stated that once the existing signatories (Mervyn and Andrew) had given online permission to add her to the account, she will separate the account and remove Carol Juffs details. Mervyn and Andrew will agree a joint action in order to resolve this.

9. **Matters outside of Monksilver** – none.

10. **Planning Applications** – Wyndham Estates. As no councillors had responded to Mervyn’s email, he has not drafted a response to the planners. A discussion followed on the impact of new development on infrastructure and in particular drainage and bus services. Christine confirmed that S.106 Agreements can be used for this type of infrastructure although it is now often used more for childrens’ play areas.
11. **Highways**, including the speed limit update. Two councillors expressed concern that some people had been upset at the open funding request. Mary confirmed that £3,700 has been received to-date. She will circulate a spreadsheet. Mervyn understands that the scheme will remain open for a little longer. He stated that the community has been generous and that there will be more than enough to meet the costs in September.
12. **Flooding and drainage**. As has been previously reported at the open meeting, there is a problem of sewage discharging into the river. As the council is meeting with the Environment Agency on Monday 20th, the matter can be discussed.
13. **Pathways and deer management**. Dan reported that the path between the pub and the churchyard has become overgrown again. The churchyard team is to be asked to keep the church side cut back and Simon is to be asked to keep his side cut back.
14. **Neighbourhood watch**. Lydia will liaise with the team at Williton and introduce herself as the lead councillor. The village will benefit from new signage as a deterrent.
15. There was no further business.
16. The date of the next meeting is 12th August 2024 at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9.25.p.m.