

CREECH ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes for the Meeting of Creech St Michael Parish Council held at Creech St Michael Village Hall on **Monday 5 February 2024 at 7.00pm**

Councillor Attendance

Cllr. Annabelle Peters – Chair	AP	Present	Cllr, Neil Davidson – Vice Chair	ND	Present
Cllr. Barbara Williams	BW	Present	Cllr. Charlie Cudlip	CC	Present
Cllr. David Griffin	DG	Present	Cllr. Stephen Greenhalgh	SG	Present
Cllr. Paul Tucker	PT	Present	Cllr. Kieran Roe MBE	KR	Present

Also Present: Eight (8) members of the public (including one (1) via the Zoom stream), Cllr. Norman Cavill (Somerset Council) and Cllr. David Fothergill (Somerset Council) and Andrew Williams, Creech St Michael Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

Meeting started at 7.00pm

1.0	Chair's Welcome
	AP welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited the members of the public present to speak.
2.0	Public Question time - Questions asked by the Public and Press will be noted.
	<p>A resident raised his concerns regarding the behaviour of dog walkers who were failing to keep to footpaths through private land, putting themselves at risk and damaging farmland and crops.</p> <p>AP agreed that this was irresponsible behaviour and offered to include an article on the issue in a forthcoming edition of the Parish Press. The Clerk and RFO would also contact the Footpaths Warden and seek further advice.</p> <p>The Chair of Ruishton Parish Council spoke about the concerns within his parish at the withdrawal of a school bus service that serves Stoke St Mary, Henlade and Ruishton. As a consequence of the removal of the service, children will be expected to walk using footpaths that run through Creech St Michael. A request was made to the Parish Council to clear the footpath that runs along Lipe Lane from the old viaduct to the bridge. The Clerk and RFO would seek advice from contractors on the cost of undertaking the works.</p>
3.0	To Receive Somerset Council Councillors' Reports
	<p>Cllr. David Fothergill provided a report on current matters from Somerset Council.</p> <p>2024/5 Council Budget: Despite recent increased Government funding the scale of the Council's financial woes in Somerset have been set out in papers to the Executive meeting due to be held on 7th February. In the papers a budget gap of £36.6m for 2024/5 is predicted to increase to £147.9m in 2026/7 if no actions are taken. Without taking these actions the Council will have no choice other to</p>

issue a Section 114 (bankruptcy) notice. Consequently, the Council is proposing over 260 cuts (or fee increases) to service funding in 2024/5.

A full list of cuts to funding for services can be found at <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s24438/Appendix%207%20-%20Detailed%20List%20of%20Savings%20Proposals.pdf>

Changes to waste collection days: New service guides, including an 18-month collection calendar have begun to arrive at houses in the former Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton areas, as well as a small part of South Somerset. The changes which start from Monday 12th February will make rounds more efficient and manageable for crews, whilst reducing mileage and carbon emissions.

Local nature recovery strategy: Somerset Council has launched an online survey to shape the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which will provide a single vision for nature recovery in Somerset. The work is funded by Defra and local authorities throughout England have been appointed to lead the work. For more information visit www.somerset.gov.uk/lnrs

Voter registration: Residents in Somerset are encouraged to make sure they are ready to vote in elections – both local and Parliamentary. The next scheduled elections in Somerset are for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Avon and Somerset on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Taunton Park and Ride: Somerset Council has awarded a new contract to run Taunton's Park and Ride service to Stagecoach Southwest following a successful tendering bid. The Southwest-based operator will run buses Monday to Saturday from the Silk Mills and Gateway sites from 12 February 2024, taking over from First Bus South. The cost of a ticket will remain just £1 for any single journey but the frequency will change to every 20 minutes.

Highways: Cross Rifles Junction, Bridgwater The Council has reviewed plans to deliver a major infrastructure project at the A38/39 roundabout near the Cross Rifles pub and Sainsburys and made a decision to replace it with a new proposal which will require significant less disruption for residents and road users.

Roadworks offences: Broadband provider Truespeed Communications Ltd has been hit with fines and charges totalling more than £34k after pleading guilty to five offences in Somerset. Truespeed admitted failing to install proper traffic management and guarding broken and excavated road surfaces to ensure the safety of pedestrians on a number of occasions, in breach of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

Council tax changes: The request to Government for an exceptional increase in Council Tax had been rejected.

4.0

Apologies for Absence

4.1 To Receive any Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received in advance from Cllr. Phillips, Cllr. Giles and Cllr. Birch.

4.2 To Approve any Apologies for Absence

All absences were approved.

Prop:PT

Sec:BW

In Favour:8

Against:0

Abstain:0

5.0	Declarations of Interests				
	5.1 Declarations of Individual Members				
	None.				
	5.2 Dispensation Request				
	None.				
6.0	Minutes				
	To Review and Approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2024. [M]				
	All members confirmed they had received a copy of the minutes. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.				
	Prop:AP	Sec:CC	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
7.0	Review and Monitor the Actions Outstanding from Past Meetings – See Appendix A for details of action points and progress toward the completion of each action.				
	Items for Decision				
8.0	<p>Budget for the 2024/25 Financial Year - to approve the draft budget for the 2024/25 financial year. [M]</p> <p>At the previous Parish Council meeting, members were provided with inaccurate information by the Clerk and RFO. This information had been revised and was being presented again for consideration.</p> <p>The Clerk and RFO presented the budget paper that set out a proposal to deliver a balance budget with reserves being allocated to cover expenditure totalling £21,000.00. This will result in reserves held reducing to 94,000.00 at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.</p> <p>DG commented that the precept increase was significantly lower than many neighbouring parish and town councils and that it would be imprudent to not take steps to guard against the issues that will be faced once the impact of Somerset Council's cuts are felt.</p> <p>ND expressed that it was important that the Parish Council made it clear that they currently are not prepared to take on additional commitments without further clarification from the Unitary Authority on the scale of those commitments.</p> <p>CC noted that there was a role for the Local Community Network in addressing the stewardship role for parish and town councils and it was noted that some larger councils would not be participating in the Highway Steward role.</p> <p>The option of purchasing a mower for the Recreation Park was discussed. Cllr. Cavill suggested that there was the possibility of sharing a mower with West Monkton Parish Council. The Clerk and RFO would make contact with his counterpart at West Monkton Parish Council to discuss this.</p> <p>The budget as proposed was approved.</p>				
	Prop:AP	Sec: ND	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
9.0	Parish Council Precept – to approve the Parish Council Precept request for 2024/25. [M]				

	A proposal to request an increase in the Precept of 22% on the previous year was approved.				
	Prop:AP	Sec:CC	In Favour:7	Against:1	Abstain:0
10.0	<p>Recreation Park Tree Survey – to consider a proposal to appoint a contractor to undertake a health and safety survey of the tree population at the Recreation Park, Creech St Michael, including acceptance of a quotation for the works to be carried out. [M]</p> <p>The Clerk and RFO reported that five contractors had been contacted and asked to quote for the work to undertake a survey and only one had responded with a quote. ND suggested that the same survey would be required for the Canal Car Park.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Clerk and RFO would seek revised quotes to include the Canal Car Park and return with these to the next meeting. No vote was taken.</p>				
	Prop:-	Sec:-	In Favour:-	Against:-	Abstain:-
11.0	<p>Annual Parish Meeting – to approve a draft agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting. [M]</p> <p>The draft agenda was considered and approved. It was suggested that a speaker on the project to update the canal side planetary walk would be welcome.</p>				
	Prop:CC	Sec:PT	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
12.0	<p>Flexible Working Policy – to approve the Parish Council Flexible Working Policy. [V]</p> <p>ND confirmed that the Staffing Committee had approved the policy. The Flexible Working Policy was approved.</p>				
	Prop:ND	Sec:AP	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
13.0	<p>Absence Policy – to approve the Parish Council Absence Policy. [M]</p> <p>ND confirmed that the Staffing Committee had approved the policy, subject to one minor change. The Clerk and RFO confirmed that the amendment to the policy had been included in the version before the Parish Council. The Absence Policy was approved.</p>				
	Prop:ND	Sec:PT	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
14.0	<p>Policy Review – to review and propose changes to the policies listed below.</p> <p>14.1 Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. The Disciplinary Policy & Procedure was approved for renewal.</p>				
	Prop:ND	Sec:CC	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
	<p>14.2 Grievance Policy & Procedure. Grievance Policy & Procedure was approved for renewal.</p>				
	Prop:AP	Sec:CC	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:0
15.0	<p>Financial Transactions Report – to review and approve the Financial Transaction Report for the period between 30.12.2023 and 26.01.2024 [M]</p> <p>The Clerk and RFO reported on the transactions for the period. The transactions were approved and the record was signed by the Chair.</p>				
	Prop:AP	Sec:KR	In Favour:8	Against:0	Abstain:
	Items for Discussion				
16.0	Joint Meeting with West Monkton Parish Council 20.02.2024.				

	The proposed agenda for the meeting was presented and discussed. It was suggested that a Chair for the meeting be appointed. The Clerk and RFO to contact West Monkton Parish Council Clerk to agree this.
	Updates from Committees, Panels and Working Groups
17.0	Finance Committee 17.1 Income and Expenditure Year to Date. The income and expenditure report for the year to date was scrutinised by members.
18.0	Staffing Committee Meeting held 22.01.2024 ND confirmed that the Committee had met and considered a number of new policies and had undertaken a review of the training matrix record.
19.0	Planning Committee Meeting held 29.01.2024 In the absence of Cllr. Phillips, the Clerk and RFO provided a summary of the meeting. The Committee had considered a number of planning applications, including amendments to plans for the development on land off Derham Close. In addition, work had been started to provide an update to the Neighbourhood Development Plan and consideration had been given to the implications of a negative outcome to the appeal hearing for the application for 100 homes at North end. The Clerk and RFO shared the Planning Log that is used by the Planning Committee to track planning applications.
20.0	Traffic Panel No update.
21.0	Canal Panel ND to arrange a meeting of the Panel.
22.0	Party in the Park Working Group 22.1 Fish & Chip Lunch SG reported that the event was a great success and feedback from those that attended had been very positive. The meeting commended all involved for their efforts.
23.0	Events Tug of War A meeting of the organising group was scheduled for the following day. AP would report back to the Parish Council at the next meeting.
24.0	Newsletter Working Group No update.
25.0	Footpaths The Clerk and RFO provided a verbal update from the Footpaths Volunteer. An issue had been identified with PRoW T10/5 that will require some works to be undertaken. The Parish Council would consider contributing to the costs of these works. It is hoped that the Somerset Council volunteer will undertake works to clear the overgrown parts of the path between Ham and Creech

	St Michael and concerns had been raised about the condition of the footpath T10/5 southern corner of Woodcross Farm and this is being investigated by the Somerset Council Rights of Way Area Warden.
	Other Matters
26.0	Correspondence
	26.1 To consider any correspondence received that Councillors wish to raise that has already been circulated. None.
	26.2 To note items of correspondence received by the Clerk and RFO deemed appropriate to be brought to the attention of the Parish Council. None.
27.0	New Matters to be Carried Forward ND asked for clarification on the actions that would be pursued following the decision to approve the budget. The Clerk and RFO would check the minutes of the recent Local Community Network to seek to contact the person who could assist with funding of the Youth project.

The meeting ended at 8.57pm

[M] = Where a resolution (vote) is expected

Andrew Williams, CSM PC, Clerk and RFO, 07708 680797, email clerk@creechstmichael.net

The next Creech St Michael (CSM) Parish Council meetings are on:

4 March 2024

8 April 2024

at 7pm in the CSM Village Hall

at 7pm in the CSM Village Hall

