



## DRAFT MINUTES OF SAMPFORD COURTENAY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday January 17 2024

**Present** – Cllrs M Wilson ( Chair ) M. Carpenter , C Coleman , P Collins , J McIlwraith , V Smedley and T Squire .

Cllr Watts ( WDBC ) Malcolm Harris ( Clerk ) 3 members of the public

1. **Chairs Welcome** – Cllr Wilson outlined the format of the meeting. Due to the length of the agenda there was a need for strict time management and Cllr McIlwraith had offered to record the meeting.
2. **Apologies** - Received by Cllr J Moesel
3. **Public Participation** – No items were received
4. **Declarations of interest** – 4b) Cllr Coleman declared a personal interest under agenda item 20
5. **Approval of the minutes of meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023** – the minutes were agreed and all in favour subject to the following amendment that on Item 13e Finance - *it should be minuted that the Proposer was Cllr McIlwraith and Seconded by Cllr Coleman.*  
**Amendment agreed. All in Favour**
6. **WDBC Report – Cllr Watts verbally reported on the following issues :** (1) the WDBC Pre- Audit meeting where it was announced that the Borough Council had received good reports on strategic risk assessment , anti-fraud and bribery and corruption reports . There were some issues around IT. (2) The WDBC Budget setting process has begun for 2024-25. (3) The Borough Council have appointed 4 Honorary Aldermen whose service has been distinguished. (4) Parking proposals in Okehampton and Tavistock have proved to be contentious and WDBC have agreed to take the issue to Devon County Council. Cllr McIlwraith will be attending the next WDBC meeting in a capacity as a member of the public – issue to be raised – election costs for small parish councils For further details on activity within the Borough Council – [www.westdevon.gov.uk](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk)
7. **Planning**
  - 7a) **3615/23/CLE** – Certificate of lawfulness – Fox Covert Caravan EX20 2 RZ No comments were received by Councillors before the deadline for Parish Council response. However it is possible for individuals to access the Planning Portal and make comments.
  - 7b) **0946/23/FUL** – Conditional Approval – Erection of Garage - Information only and noted



## 8. Parish Priorities

**8a) Safer Roads** – Cllr Collins reported that a new application had been forwarded to WDBC and he will provide an update on progress at the next meeting

**8b) Autumn Clean Up** – Cllr McIlwraith reported that he had approached Network Rail for a new licence which will enable access to the Sampford Courtenay Station property – this is pending and a future report will be brought back to a parish council meeting

**8c) Prayer Book Rebellion** – a recent meeting proved productive and notes of the meeting are recorded on the Parish website . [www.https://www.sampfordcourtenay-pc.gov.uk/node/802](http://www.https://www.sampfordcourtenay-pc.gov.uk/node/802)

**8d) Footpaths** – Cllr Carpenter reported that trees had been cleared from Clyston and Bulland Lanes

**8e) Dog Fouling** – Cllr Wilson contacted the WDBC Dog Warden and raised the parish concerns. WDBC have agreed to undertake patrols with a remit to identify offending dog owners and potentially take enforcement action. Notices on bins – leaflets drops and media information will be forthcoming in the next few months.

**8f) Snow Plan and Grit Bins** – Cllr Wilson has provided the Church with a salt bag and discussed authorised use of the Grit Bins. Some training has been offered to support effective use in the future.

**8g) Village Green Inspection** – Cllr Wilson undertook the monthly village green inspection and provided a report.

## 9. Councillor and Clerk Reports

**9a)** Cllr Wilson will circulate a You Tube video to all Cllrs following a recent Webinar briefing from the Leader of Devon Council , Cllr John Hart  
**9b)** Worknest Webinar – this item was moved to the agenda item 23

## 10. Internal Auditor 2024-25 appointment

The Clerk reported to the meeting that he had contacted Rachel Avery and discussed the Parish Council internal audit requirements.

*It was agreed that Rachel Avery be appointed as the internal auditor for 2024-25*

**Proposed Cllr Wilson    Seconded Cllr Coleman    All in favour**

## 11. Outsourcing of Payroll Services

The Clerk reported to the meeting that he had contacted Glen Radler Accountancy Services on the recommendation of a number other local parish clerks – this with a view to provide the Payroll services for the Parish Council . The cost of the service is £45 per quarter.

*It was agreed that the Parish Council would enter into an agreement with Glen Radler Accountancy Services to provide the Parish Council PayRoll Service*

**Proposed Cllr Wilson    Seconded Cllr Coleman    All in favour**



- 12. Parish Council Representative on Village Hall Trustees** - following the Village Hall AGM , it was confirmed that Bob Tucker had been appointed as Village Hall representative reporting to the Parish Council.

*It was agreed that the Parish Council accept the appointment of Bob Tucker as the Village Hall representative .*

Proposed Cllr Wilson      Seconded Cllr Squire      All in favour

- 13. Meeting Dates 2024/2025** The Clerk had circulated a list of proposed new meeting dates for 2024-25 . (NB . March 27<sup>th</sup> 2024 and May 1<sup>st</sup> 2024 dates were agreed in 2023 )  
It was agreed that the dates for parish council meetings in 2024-25 would be: - June 26<sup>th</sup> 2024 , September 4<sup>th</sup> 2024 , November 13<sup>th</sup> 2024 , January 8<sup>th</sup> 2025 , March 26<sup>th</sup> 2025 , May 7<sup>th</sup> 2025, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2025 , September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025 and November 5<sup>th</sup> 2025

Proposed Cllr Wilson      Seconded Cllr Carpenter      All in favour

#### **14. Finance**

**14a) Financial update** - the spreadsheets were circulated to Cllrs – noted

**14b) Payments and Transfers** – the payments and transfers were approved . All agreed

**14c)** An additional item was brought to the meeting by Cllr Wilson regarding the high costs of renewal with EDF for the Toilet block supply. Cllr Wilson requested that the Chair and Clerk be given delegated authority to negotiate with an alternate provider to ensure a more cost effective outcome. Further details at the next meeting. This was agreed with all in favour .

#### **15. Response to unilateral action taken by Cllr Coleman in respect of Clerks report on VAT 2023**

A report was circulated to Cllrs with advice from HMRC Specialist in VAT Tax and Advisor to Local Authorities indicating that the working practices and actions of the Council are compliant with our VAT responsibilities as reported by the Clerk in 2023.

#### **16. Response to the Freedom Of Information (FOI ) request by Cllr Coleman**

Cllr

Coleman put forward a request in writing for a FOI regarding finance papers linked to the budget setting process.

Cllr

Wilson, set out the response in a report circulated to all Cllrs with the following recommendations :

1) *For all Councillors to acknowledge Standing Orders and where a democratic vote has been taken then S7b is observed and that (particular where information has already been received by Councillors) that demands on Council resources are not made to pursue a personal agenda .*

Proposed Cllr Wilson      Seconded Cllr Carpenter      Motion carried 5 in favour and 2 abstentions from Cllrs Coleman and McIlwraith

2) *That the documents requested be given to Cllr Coleman but that it is acknowledged that this has caused unnecessary stress and only adverted additional expense to the parishioners because it has been done voluntarily by the Chair*

Proposed Cllr Wilson      Seconded Cllr Carpenter      Motion carried 5 in favour and 2 abstentions from Cllrs Coleman and McIlwraith



- 17. Registration of the Church Room** - Cllr Coleman had previously circulated a report on this issue at the October 4<sup>th</sup> 2023 meeting . The matter was concluded at that meeting . At this meeting ( January 17<sup>th</sup> 2024 ) Cllr Coleman requested in his words “a full retraction as a body corporate in respect to the untrue allegations made, and to offer an unreserved apology to Cllr Coleman which is to be minuted formally in order to correct the public record “

*Cllr Wilson response to the motion was to confirm that this item had previously been considered and subsequently would not be discussed at this meeting nor any future meeting. Reference of S9a and supported by S7 b Sampford Courtenay Standing Orders refer*

- 18. Parish Council Election Result – a report from Cllr Coleman** was received at the meeting with regard to the 2023 Parish Council Election results .

Cllr Coleman requested that the minutes should provide a public record of:

- 1) who instructed the Webmail Administrator to publish an extract from a confidential email to the Clerk , without Mrs Allesbrook’s consent
- 2) an explanation why the automated re-issuing of this publication was not rescinded as soon as this mistake was identified ?
- 3) an explanation of how this mistake occurred is published to parishioners , along with an apology
- 4) a full apology is issued to Mrs Allsebrook

The issues within the report were discussed. For future reference, the Chair told the meeting that any offences under Council election regulations are referred to the Local Government Monitoring Officer and Electoral Commission. A vote was taken on all 4 motions .

**Proposed Cllr Coleman    Seconded Cllr McIlwraith. The motions were defeated by 5 votes to 2**

- 19. “ Outcome of Review “ by an Impartial Mind of the 2024-25 budget** - report by Cllr Coleman .

This item was previously discussed and very closely scrutinised at the December 2023 meeting. The outcome at that time had been 5 votes accepting the budget proposals and precept level , 1 against and 1 abstention. Therefore this item on the January 2024 agenda was not discussed. S7b of standing orders refers.

- 20. “Restoring Your Railway – Dartmoor Line “** Cllr Coleman – no report received . Agenda item not discussed.

- 21. Return to the Accepted Meeting Structure –** Cllr Coleman proposed that the Council consider a number of conduct issues relating to the Parish Council meetings : 1) *observing appropriate decorum* 2) *proper style of address* 3) *reinstatement of the SCPC gavel and block*

There was a short discussion and it was accepted that as part of the Respect and Civility Pledge that each Councillor had signed up to the first two items should be observed but as there was no seconder, the proposals were not considered.



**22. Proper attribution of Media Communications** - Cllr Coleman – no report was received . Subsequently, it was agreed that a paper will come to a future meeting.

**23. Improving working relationships between members of the SCPC**

**23a)** Cllr McIlwraith had previously circulated papers to Cllrs and the WDBC Monitoring Officer outlining his concerns regarding the conduct of Sampford Parish Council.

Cllr McIlwraith proposed that the Council consider the following motions :

- 1) The Council acknowledges that in the past it has individually and collectively fallen short of the standards set out in the Code of Conduct and Rules of Order and the Council commits to achieving and exceeding those standards*
- 2) The Council acknowledges that within the scope and rules of order each Cllr is free to discharge their duties as see fit*
- 3) The Council acknowledges that mutual respect and tolerance are the bedrock of a successful council*

**23b) Worknest Webinar** – Cllr Wilson gave a verbal update and proposed that a group of Councillors agree to meet in February to watch the Worknest Webinar; discuss and reflect the contents and produce a paper outlining the way forward for the Parish Council and its Councillors. All agreed

Cllr Wilson offered an amendment to 23a) - *that the proposals sit under the Respect and Civility Pledge which Councillors are signed up to and that they should be dealt with at a separate meeting and are used to start the conversation at a meeting to be arrange for February*

**Proposed Cllr McIlwraith   Seconded Cllr Wilson   All in favour**

**24. Agenda items for the next meeting** – the Chair asked the Councillors if they had any items for the next meeting – March 27<sup>th</sup> 2024 . Cllr Carpenter replied that he would provide a report on the Sampford Courtenay Public Toilets

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Date of the next meeting – Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Members of the Public are cordially invited to attend all Parish Council meetings and to suggest items for the agenda. Please contact the Clerk at least 7 days in advance of the scheduled meeting .

Malcolm Harris – Clerk to Sampford Courtenay Parish Council

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