

**MINUTES OF HAMBRIDGE AND WESTPORT PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2024**  
**IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, HAMBRIDGE VILLAGE HALL**

**24/1209 PRESENT:**

Cllr. S. Denley (Chairman), Cllr. R Meecham (Vice-Chair), Cllr. P. Masters, Cllr. R Maidment, Cllr G. Hill, & Mrs. L. Brooks (Clerk). There were no members of the public present.

**24/1210 APOLOGIES:**

Nothing to report

**24/1211 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Nothing to report.

**24/1212 MINUTES:**

The Minutes from the November meeting had been circulated. They were agreed as being an accurate account of the meeting and signed.

Proposed: Cllr. Meecham

Seconded: Cllr. Hill

Agreed unanimously.

**24/1213 PUBLIC TIME**

**24/1213/a Public Time:**

Nothing to report

**24/1213/b Unitary Councillor report:**

There was no Unitary Councillor present, and no report received.

**24/1213/c P.C.S.O. Report:**

Nothing to report.

**24/1214 MATTERS ARISING**

**24/1214/a Budget and precept**

The clerk discussed the need for increasing the precept again for 2025-26 with the Parish Councillors.

The Clerk answered any questions that the Parish Council had regarding the budget. She explained that nothing had changed with regards to information coming through on costs of services from SC. The Clerk discussed the two options – a 10% rise or a 15% rise. The rise would be necessary to cover all the extra costs for services that the Parish Council would be responsible for from April 2025. From April 2025, they will need to fund the following services for the two villages: emptying of dog and litter bins (weekly), grit bins (filled twice a year), to pay for non-statutory Highways repairs and drain/gully clearance, fund roadside maintenance work (verges, hedges, ditches plus footpath strimming and weed treatment on pavements. Any non-statutory Highways work will cost the Parish Council up to £1,000 per day (depending on type of work). The clerk/RFO explained how the sum of £8,834.02 would be ring-fenced. (This breaks down as follows: £3,000 bank retention - contingency, £5,000 is services fund – saved from 2024-25 budget and CIL money £834.02). The Parish Council have been very careful with their expenditure so far this current financial year in an effort to increase the reserves.

The Parish Council decided to put a 15% increase onto the precept from last year. This decision was not an easy one for the Parish Councillors to make. However, they realise that we are entering a period of uncertainty and whilst Somerset Council are cutting services, the Parish Council are having to pick up the funding of these to ensure Hambridge and Westport receive the same services that they have now.

The precept for 2025-26 will be set at £29,754.00. For a BAND D property this will mean the Parish Council part of your Council Tax will be £133.95 per year (£2.58 per week).

Proposed: Cllr. Maidment

Seconded: Cllr. Meecham

There were 4 Councillors in favour and 1 against.

Agreed by majority.

The Clerk will now submit their precept application to SC.

**Action: Clerk**

The total number of dwellings in each band are:

Band A - 17: Band B - 26: Band C - 56: Band D - 55: Band E - 52: Band F - 30: Band G - 6:

Band H - 0: Total number of properties in the parish: 242

**24/1214/b Reminder - Consultation on division boundaries for Somerset Council**

The clerk reminded the Parish Councillors that the closing date for The Local Government Boundary Commission was January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

**24/1214/c Clerk's report**

The clerk updated the parish council on the lack of salt/grit that had been promised from SC to top up the grit bins. She informed them she had been informed that the order had originally been ‘forgotten to be placed’ by Highways and now they had it but there was a lack of people to deliver it. She also reported on the Somerset Parish Conference that had taken place in Bridgewater. Reports varied considerably between clerks who attended and Somerset Council reports. SC reported that it was a great success whilst clerks reported that it was a complete waste of time and more of a ‘good day out’ for Somerset Council workers. The clerk also discussed how a clerk from a neighbouring parish had been investigating using local contractors to clear their drains and silts traps as an alternative to using Kier, to see if they could get a better price. She reported that this clerk had been informed by an Assistant Highways manager that Parish Councils had to use Kier due to liability of claims as Kier would be able to record/report any issues or damage". Clerks have reported back that this would surely be unlawful if we were prevented from accepting other quotes because of the unlawful barriers being put in the way of the Council. It clearly states in the Highways pilot scheme Q&A - *Can Parish Councils carry out work via a contractor appointed by them instead of commissioning the work via this pilot proposal?*

and the answer is: *Yes, absolutely. Parish Councils are not compelled to take part in the pilot offer from Somerset Council and Kier.* Once again, Parish Councils were receiving mixed messages, again an example of lack of communication. Clarification on this was being chased.

**24/1215 PLANNING:**

**24/1215/a Matters for report:**

Planning breaches: Cllr Roundell Green is chasing.

**24/1215/b Decisions Notified:**

Nothing to report.

**24/1215/c Applications for consideration.**

Nothing to report.

**24/1216 FINANCE:**

**24/1216/a Matters for report**

Budget – monthly update: The clerk gave a monthly update to the Parish Council

**24/1216/b Matters for Resolution**

Nothing to report.

**24/1216/c Cheques Payable:**

All paid via Unity Trust Bank – direct online transfer.

<b>PAYMENTS DUE</b>		
Louise Brooks	Democratic services – Nov 2024 (inc. nation gov pay rise backdated to April 2024 – beginning of financial year)	£ 902.23
HMRC	Employee NI & PAYE & Employer NI to pay – Nov 24	£ 96.92
Louise Brooks	Home Office Allowance – Nov 2024 - Gov set	£ 26.00
Louise Brooks	Nov Office supplies – Includes paper, ink and other office consumables, postage.	£ 15.40

Proposed: Cllr. Meecham

Seconded: Cllr. Masters

Agreed unanimously.

**24/1217 CORRESPONDENCE:**

The Clerk reported that all correspondence received had been forwarded to the Parish Councillors.

**24/1218 FOOTPATHS:**

Clerk reported that any footpath issues to be reported straight to SCC Rights of Way Officer.

**24/1219 MEMBERS' REPORTS/ITEMS FOR NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:**

Nothing to report

**24/1220 Items for next Agenda:**

Nothing to add

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm

**The next parish council meeting will take place one week later than normal**

**The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.30 pm in the village hall.**