

Office Tel: 01643 863350
Email: clerk@porlockparishcouncil.gov.uk
Website: www.porlock.org/porlockpc
Office Hours:
Tuesday 10:00 – 15:00
Wednesday 10.00 – 15:00
Thursday 10.00 – 15:00

PORLOCK



Parish Room
Old School Centre
West End
PORLOCK
Somerset, TA24 8QD

Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at Porlock Village Hall on Wednesday 9th November 2022

Those Present: Cllr Chris Wood (Chair), Cllr Iain Fraser, Cllr Malcolm McCoy, Cllr John Ware, Cllr Terry Gable. Cllr Milne SW & Taunton District Council (part) and Cllr Frances Nicholson Somerset County Council (part). Mrs Kim Rowe – Volunteer Minute Secretary. Some 15 members of the public were also present.

1. **Apologies:**

There were none.

2. **Declarations of Interest & Pecuniary Interest Dispensation:**

There were none.

3. **Approval and Signing of Minutes (Various):**

Full Council Meeting on 12th October 2022: Cllr Ware proposed that these be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Fraser. Cllr Wood then led a page-by-page review of the Minutes. There were no points raised and they were accepted by ALL except Cllr McCoy who abstained, as he had not attended the meeting.

Finance Committee Meeting on 27th October 2022: Cllr Fraser proposed that these be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Ware. Cllr Wood then led a page-by-page review, and there were no points raised. The Minutes were accepted UNANIMOUSLY.

Finance Committee Meeting on 3rd November 2022: Cllr Ware proposed that these be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Fraser. Cllr Wood then led a page-by-page review, and there were no points raised. The Minutes were accepted by ALL except Cllr Gable who abstained, as she had not attended the meeting. **Item Updates from Finance Committee Meeting on 3rd November 2022: Item 4, Review of Payments Schedule:** A preliminary Payments Schedule had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. As a final Payments Schedule was now available that would be addressed under Item 4 of the November 9th Agenda. **Item 5 (April 3to October 2022 Accounts):** Documents had been circulated to Councillor previously and a page-by-page review raised no points. Cllr Fraser proposed that they be accepted, and this was seconded by Cllr Ware. This was then

agreed UNANIMOUSLY. Cllr Wood noted that only Item 5 on the 3rd November Agenda is to be *recommended* to Full Council for approval.

4. **Approval of the Finance Payments Schedule for November**

A copy of the relevant report had been circulated prior to the meeting. **Cllr Ware** proposed that this be accepted. **Cllr Fraser** seconded this. Cllr Wood led a page-by-page review, and then requested that Councillors vote on the matter. The report was agreed UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **Matters to report for information purposes only and action points raised at the previous meeting:**

There were none.

6. **Chairman's Announcements:**

Cllr Wood's report noted the following: **(1) A By-Election notice** has been posted relating to the 7 Casual Vacancies. Nominations must be submitted (to Williton) by 4 pm on Friday 18th November. Cllr Wood mentioned that if there were 7 (or fewer) nominations, then the vacancies would be filled as non-contested. New Councillors must take up their positions within 28 days, thus they should be in place for the December 14th Full Council Meeting. However, an EGM could be called if the timescale required it. All agreed that, if possible, the new Councillors should begin their tenure at the December meeting. Cllr Wood said he wished to thank the remaining councillors for continuing to maintain a range of important services for the people of Porlock during this time. **(2) Media articles/letters in the WS Free Press and Leveller Confidential (on-line and separately circulated on FaceBook)** initiated by former councillors. Cllr Wood addressed the points being made as follows: **Proper Officer & Clerk:** He said Porlock Parish Council is actively recruiting for the position of Clerk, as the absence of one is obviously a considerable difficulty. However, SALC is providing relevant support during this period. A new Clerk will not be in post before the December Council meeting. Cllr Wood added that an (Independent) Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) is in place and on 28th September was asked to undertake a review of current financial procedures and examine the auditor's reports for the last two years [*Note: this matter is raised as a separate agenda item later in the meeting, see Item 9 onwards*]. **(3) Annual Government & Accountability Return 2021/22:** Cllr Wood mentioned that this was filed with the external auditor (PFK Littlejohn) on 29th September which was before the deadline. It is not known when the auditor's report will be issued. As permitted under public inspection rules, former Councillors McCanlis and Thornton inspected the accounts on 8th November [*Note: the opportunity for public inspection of the accounts closes on 10th November*]. **(4) Leveller Confidential Information:** Cllr Wood reported that he had received emails from Mr Andrew Lee (Editor) and Mr James Garrett, both requesting information. Mr Lee's request was covered by reference to the Standing Orders. However, Mr Garrett's questions were rooted in information that he had received from an unknown, but informed source. The information requested was, and remains, confidential and therefore cannot be disclosed.

7. **Public Participation:**

Cllr Wood opened the meeting to public participation [approximately 15 persons]. Mrs Carol Rawle (resident of Porlock) said that she wished to thank the Chair for all of his hard work over the past few months, and also the remaining Councillors, whom she pointed out, had been elected. Mrs Rawle then asked if Cllr Wood had received advance copies of the 2 letters which appeared in the WS Free Press recently. Cllr Wood said that he had not, although he

had been contacted by one of the parties on the morning of publication. Mrs Rawle gave way. Mr Stephen Rawle (resident of Porlock) said that he would also like to thank all Councillors, particularly those who had remained after the resignations of 7 elected councillors. He went on to say that the resignations were disappointing, but he acknowledged the pressures that were placed upon them, and the former Clerk. Mr Rawle gave way. Mr Duncan McCanlis (resident of Porlock) said that he had been the author of one of the letters. He went on to say that he believed Cllr Wood had been aware of his concerns before the letter was submitted. Mr McCanlis gave way.

There being no further comments public participation closed at 19.46. 19.47 Cllr A Milne arrived.

8. District Council Report

Cllr Milne said that he had little to report because as everyone was aware the District Council was winding down rapidly after the decision to have a Unitary body. Cllr Milne said that his main task recently was to look at District Officers' contracts, and this was of no relevance to Porlock.

9. RFO Report on Financial Procedures:

Cllr Wood mentioned that the report had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting and said he felt that it should be accepted in full. **Cllr Fraser** proposed that this be so. This was seconded by **Cllr Ware**. This was agreed UNANIMOUSLY. Cllr Wood stated that the report would become a public document and will be circulated along with a paper on how FinCom recommends the recommendations be implemented.

10. Review Earmarked Reserves

Cllr Wood reported that these had been finalised with the RFO and that Councillors had already been issued with a background report. **Cllr Ware** proposed that both the Reserves list and supporting notes be accepted and this was seconded by **Cllr Fraser**. This was agreed UNANIMOUSLY.

11. Bright HR Arrangements Review

All agreed that this should be tabled at a later meeting.

19.51 Cllr Nicholson arrived.

12. Coronation Committee

It was agreed by all that this should be deferred until new councillors were in place.

13. Matters Raised for Information Purposes Only

Cost of Living Advisors: Cllr Wood informed all present that the Village Hall (downstairs) Meeting Room had been hired every other Thursday – as from 24th November – so that anyone in the community who wishes may visit a range of advisors. He added that this will be widely advertised.

Cllr Nicholson offered apologies for the delay in arriving and gave her report. Community Network Proposals - Highways: Cllr Nicholson said that around a year ago attempts were made to make the system far more localised, especially by using local knowledge. She added that this was producing real change; a Highways Steward was in place and monies have been set aside to support a local commissioning trial. Cllr Nicholson mentioned that Parish Councils

will be discussing this in groups. She went on to say that the relevant funds must be spent this Financial Year, but it was hoped that provision would again be made in the new FY. Cllr Nicholson said that the proposals put forward by **Porlock's Pilot Highways Group** were very much part of the overall discussion and that the Unitary body was required to acknowledge that a solution suitable for one area would not be for another. She added that the **Porlock Governance Group** has been very effective, and as it had been largely in place for some time, was being viewed as model organisation. Cllr Nicholson said that it had been proposed that Exmoor should be split regarding Highways (and possibly other) matters, but that whilst it was agreed this could be of use in some situations, it was not in others. She then remarked that organisational change had delayed this being put before the public. Cllr Wood asked if the Porlock Proposal had been submitted. Cllr Nicholson said that it had been and the high attendance at the meeting had been acknowledged. There were no further questions/comments for Cllr Nicholson.

14. Correspondence:

A letter was received from Mrs Nora Maw (Treasurer) of Porlock Recreation Ground Committee concerning the Jubilee Trees. She asked who was responsible for them, given that the Parish Council had supplied them. All present agreed that the Parish Council were not responsible for the on-going care etc. of the trees. The Recreation Ground Committee letter also mentioned the condition of the trees, some of which were felt to be ailing. Cllr Fraser said that the trees had been inspected by an expert (Mr Robin Otter) who felt that whilst lots of local trees had been affected by the recent drought, they were doing well.

15. Reports from Outside Bodies:

Doverly Manor Museum: Cllr Wood informed all present that he and Mrs Rowe (Museum Trustee & Secretary) would be meeting for a document review. **Speed Limits/Highways:** Cllr Fraser noted that some 20 mph speed tests were being carried out and he will report back; the public would then be consulted. Cllr Gable reported a large pothole opposite the Spar Supermarket. Cllr Fraser said that he would visit the area and take photographs. **Porlock Library:** Cllr Ware informed all present that he and another Library volunteer had met with Somerset County Council Library Services. He was delighted to report that they were very happy with the footfall (almost back to pre-Covid levels) and the regular volunteer team of 16, plus 4 more who step in to help at events. **Recreation Ground Committee:** Cllr Gable mentioned that a ballot for the position of Chair had taken place and that Mr McCanlis had been elected. There were no other reports.

The meeting ended at 20.08 pm

Kim Rowe
Volunteer Minute Secretary
13.11.2022