

Clerk to the Council

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PORLOCK



Parish Council

Parish Room

Old School Centre

West End

PORLOCK

Somerset TA24 8NP

Signed:

Date:

Minutes of the Porlock Parish Council Meeting
The Village Hall, Wednesday 8 February 2023, 7pm
Copies of minutes and reports are available on request

Councillors Present: Cllr S Colson, Cllr M Mariner, Cllr D McCanlis (Chair), Cllr S McCanlis, Cllr D Thornton, Cllr L Thornton (Temporary volunteer Clerk and minute taker)

Also present: 12 members of the public

1. Apologies were received by the council: Cllr L Bloys.

2. To welcome the Councillors elected uncontested on Friday 27th January, to minute signing of their Declaration of Acceptance of Office and to provide an update on the remaining casual vacancies.

The Chair confirmed the election, uncontested, of Cllrs Stephen Colson and Lee Bloys, signing and witnessing of their Declarations of Acceptance of Office and Cllr Colson's completed Register of Interests, passing all papers to the Clerk for filing.

The Chair introduced Cllr Stephen Colson.

The Chair explained that as the electors had asked for elections to fill 7 vacancies, the remaining 5 vacancies would have to be filled by election. Somerset West & Taunton Council Electorate Services will organise and send Notices, the process continuing until all vacancies have been filled by election, uncontested or otherwise, until May 2027. PPC no longer have the option to co-opt Councillors to fill the vacancies.

3. Declarations of Interest and Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Dispensations

Cllr S Colson declared an interest in item 10.ix as a payment for the Repair Café which he is involved with is to be authorised. The Clerk confirmed that he should not vote to approve those payments.

4. To agree any items to be dealt with after the public, including the press, have been excluded.

There were no items for closed session.

5. Public Participation – there were 12 members of the public in attendance.

Some previous names on the Chairman's Board that were too light to read were queried, the Board having recently been updated with the names of Cllrs McCoy and Wood as the last two Chairs.

Cllr D McCanlis confirmed that this had already been queried by the Council and it was explained the update had not been organised by the current Council. It was suggested further work was needed.

The condition of the surface and the narrowness of some pavements along the High Street were raised as well as the need to resurface the road.

Cllr Nicolson later advised that resurfacing of Porlock High Street was planned for 24th -28th April 2023

Speeding cars and unsafe driving in the narrows by Dovery Manor Museum, putting pedestrians at risk, was raised.

The Speed Watch scheme was discussed and it was suggested volunteers from neighbouring villages swap to alleviate the problems of abuse sometimes received by village volunteers undertaking the Speed Watch. It was later advised that concerns about speeding and/or dangerous driving should be raised with the Police rather than Highways.

Mr. Michael Rowe asked for it to be minuted that he had again asked if the Council would confirm whether they would be supporting the Visitor Centre or not.

This matter was addressed in item 10.xiii

A procedural matter regarding approving minutes was raised, plus some finance matters regarding petty cash and budget lines were raised.

The Clerk explained that all Councillors had attended the Full Council meeting of the 14th December 2022 or had listened to the recording afterwards. The Clerk explained that non-committee member Councillors could not approve committee minutes but Full Council was not a committee.

The Clerk explained that previous coding errors had resulted in some budget lines being unreliable. This was being reported and corrected by the Clerk/RFO going forward but it may take some time for these errors to work through the system.

A question about the budget line for the Bio-diversity Campaign was raised. *The Clerk agreed to check.*

A question about the petty cash was raised.

The Clerk explained that the Petty Cash had been returned from the Library where it had been held since the previous volunteer Clerk had resigned as a Councillor. It was noted by the current volunteer Clerk that the Petty Cash had not been reconciled as the RFO wished to be present to do this. It will be reconciled before the end of the financial year, but was a de minimis amount, less than £50.

A question was asked about reporting the blocked drains in the High Street.

The Clerk confirmed all the issues with blocked drains, flooding, potholes and other Highways issues had been submitted and Report Submission confirmation emails had been received from SCC with some follow-up reports received.

6. To receive reports from Somerset County Council and Somerset West & Taunton District Council

Cllrs Frances Nicholson and Steven Pugsley (Somerset County Council) had advised that they would be able to attend but may be a little late due to other meetings to attend. This item was deferred until they had arrived.

SCC Cllr Frances Nicholson arrived later and advised on Local Government changes and budgeting with the introduction of the Unitary Authority, Somerset Council. She explained that Dulverton & Exmoor is the Local Community Network division for Porlock and was chosen as a pilot for Highways, seeing how best to deliver what matters to local communities, understanding local needs regarding highway and traffic matters.

The Exmoor Panel gives parishes a collective voice, which is important being the biggest area with the smallest population. Cllrs D & S McCanlis confirmed they had attended recently.

The financial situation has changed since the Unity Authority was proposed. ⅔ of budget to be spent on adult services and ¼ of budget on children's services. Savings will be made in Administration but reserves are likely to be mostly used up in coming year due to increases in costs (electricity bills for schools, for instance).

SCC Cllr Frances Nicholson explained she was outraged that a £22,000 saving was proposed, in a budget in the millions, by not providing grit bins and dumpy bags of salt. She encouraged everyone to complain, to embarrass the Unitary Authority, saying it was short-sighted. She suggested writing to the portfolio holder, Mike Rigby at mike.rigby@somerset.gov.uk or to petition in person at the meeting in Bridgwater on 22nd February. Cllr S McCanlis added that local farmers might be able to distribute salt/grit from a depository if this would help cut costs.

Regarding speed enforcement, Cllr Nicholson advised that grants to install flashing speed signs were available from the Police. Highways had to give permission, chapter 8 trained installers had to be used, and the signs should be moved every 2 weeks.

Cllr Nicholson advised that Porlock could submit ideas for spend on traffic issues as required by locals from the pot of £25,000 from the pilot. Sam Murrell produces a list of 'could', 'should' and 'never could'.

SCC Cllr Stephen Pugsley arrived later and reported that he had attended the last SW&T meeting before the Unitary Authority comes into being on 1/4/23. Cllr Andy Milne was present representing Porlock.

7. To APPROVE the Minutes for the Full Council Meeting held on the 11th January 2023.

No errors were reported.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Full Council meeting on 11 January 2023.

PROPOSER: Cllr M Mariner; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL PRESENT AT THAT MEETING IN FAVOUR.

8. To RECEIVE a report from the Clerk.

The Clerk read out a report highlighting the finance and governance responsibilities of the Councillors as members of the Council as the corporate body, their responsibilities and accountability regarding the annual audit, and the data from the Action Log. As requested, the Clerk confirmed that the report will be published on the PPC website.

9. To RECEIVE Portfolio reports

The Chair explained that Portfolio Groups had been set up on the advice of the RFO as an alternative to committees as working groups that could also include members of the public.

i. Assets & Property

Cllr D Thornton explained that an annual review of all assets was ongoing, starting from scratch as there was little data from recent years. The assets have been divided up between the Portfolio members to inspect and to provide feedback reports.

a. Maintenance required at the Doverhay Toilets.

Cllr D Thornton confirmed light bulbs had been fixed, and guttering and painting was needed.

b. Maintenance required at the OSC and overall appearance.

Cllr D Thornton confirmed the overflow water leak had been fixed, but other maintenance was needed such as planters, notice boards, map, and flag to go up.

Cllr D Thornton also confirmed he was looking into the solar panels and FIT payments.

ii. Environment & Community

a. Grass Cutting Contract

Cllr S McCanlis confirmed she will meet with Alan Binding to discuss the Grass Cutting contract, including proof that he has NPTC level 2 award in the safe use of pesticides (aka PA1 & PA6). Clerk will provide invoice template to help itemise work undertaken.

b. Floral display maintenance

Cllr S McCanlis confirmed she is working with two volunteers, advising that purchases must be charged to account or invoiced in line with Financial Regulations.

c. Footpath maintenance required in St. Dubricius Churchyard

Cllrs S McCanlis and L Thornton confirmed they needed to make a site visit. The Church has been contacted to discuss.

SCC Councillor Frances Nicolson had arrived so the Chair continued with Item 6. on the Agenda

10. FINANCE

i. To APPROVE the limit of £500 for the Unity credit card

Cllr L Thornton explained that the FinCom 27th Oct Minutes item 4 recorded that the limit was approved but the recommendation was not on Agenda at FC meeting of 9th Nov, so the recommendation still needed to be approved by FC.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the limit of £500 for the Unity credit card

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr M Mariner. ALL IN FAVOUR

ii. To AGREE Programme Administrators for the Unity credit card

Council **RESOLVED** to agree the Programme Administrators for the Unity credit card as Cllr Lesley Thornton and Annie Dallaway (RFO).

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

- iii. To RECEIVE an update on the Allotment Account
Cllr L Thornton explained that the FinCom 27th Oct Minutes item 5 recorded the recommendation to move Allotment Account to Unity but the recommendation was not on Agenda at FC meeting of 9th Nov. Subsequently, at FC meeting 14.12.22 it was resolved to keep the Allotment Account with NatWest due to the costs involved in moving it to Unity.
- iv. To AGREE to remove signatories on the existing NatWest Allotment Account and add new signatories.
Council **RESOLVED** to agree to remove signatories on the existing NatWest Allotment Account and add new signatories as for Unity Bank.
PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr M Mariner. ALL IN FAVOUR.
It was also suggested that the name on the address as Chris Fitzgerald should be changed.
- v. To APPROVE and sign the Bank Reconciliation to end January 2023.
It was noted that the Petty Cash is still to be reconciled.
Council **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end January 2023
PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.
- vi. To RECEIVE the Detailed Receipts & Payments to end January 2023
The Chair signed the Summary of the Receipts & Payments to end January 2023
- vii. To APPROVE Locum RFO's hours for January 2023
It was noted that the hours are more than originally agreed due to the extra hours visiting office to sort out paperwork ahead of auditor inspection, lots of compliance work, and being required for meetings. The Clerk gave, as an example, Tuesday 24th January when she and the RFO worked from 10.30 – 19.30 checking every payment from April – November 2022, comparing bank statements, payment vouchers, invoices and Payments reports approved by Council, noting the errors which were numerous.
Council **RESOLVED** to approve Locum RFO's hours for January 2023
PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.
- viii. To APPROVE Library Officer's overtime for January 2023
It was noted that all staff contracts and job specifications are to be reviewed through discussion with employees, to be discussed at the HR & Staffing meeting on Friday 10th February 2023. The Clerk advised that this meeting was open to the public but that most if not all of the business after Public Participation is likely to be in closed session.
Council **RESOLVED** to approve Library Officer's overtime for January 2023
PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR.
- ix. To APPROVE final Payments Schedule for February 2023
It was noted that two amendments for January 2023 Schedule of Payments were required as A Binding did not submit an invoice in January 2023 and that the payment for Mr Meek (Chairman's Board) was not made in January.
Cllr. L Thornton highlighted that a payment received for £24 from Hillier IH could not be identified so would be treated as a donation until queried by the payer.
Council **RESOLVED** to approve final Payments Schedule for February 2023
PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S McCanlis. ALL ABLE TO VOTE IN FAVOUR.
Cllr S Colson did not vote due to a declared conflict of interest.
- x. To APPOINT the Internal Auditor for 22/23
Cllr L Thornton explained that 4 quotes had been requested but only 2 supplied. B Howe (previous IA) is retiring and Auditing Solutions already have too much work. The Clerk and RFO recommend Microshade as they will attend office in person to discuss issues which is felt necessary in view of the current audit

concerns and the issues identified regarding record keeping and errors in the 22/23 year. Microshade £295 + £19.60 for mileage if on site. Rachel Pearson £250, no on site visit offered.

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Microshade as the Internal Auditor for 22/23

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR. It was noted that this was not the cheapest quote but the best quote due to onsite visit provision.

- xi. To CONSIDER and APPROVE using Cloud based Rialtas software

Cllr L Thornton explained that Cloud based accounting software rather than software installed on the RFO's laptop offered more security and would allow for one subscriber (RFO) and two additional Read-only users (Clerk and FinCom Chair) at £39.58 per month. The read-only user facility would provide better work sharing and monitoring.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve using Cloud based Rialtas software

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

- xii. To CONSIDER and APPROVE applying for a National Lottery Grant for the Coronation celebrations.

Cllr L Thornton explained that applications needed to be made 12 weeks before event, so an urgent decision was required to decide whether to apply and for how much, with funding up to £10,000 being available. There was also earmarked fund 340 to top up the funding from PPC, if required. PPC would ask for volunteers to join a 'steering group' to include at least one Councillors for insurance cover and to control budget. All invoicing would be through PPC and all expenditure pre-authorised. Suggestions for a mug or similar for children had been made, but which children? If just St Dubricius Ist School children, were they all necessarily from Porlock? If all 'Porlock' children, how to identify them? Cllrs S and D McCanlis discussed other plans with other groups present and Cllr S McCanlis asked if any public attending the meeting would like to be involved or apply for funding. No volunteers came forward. Funding to be applied for was discussed and a figure of £3,000 based on the Jubilee costs of £2,500 + inflation was agreed.

Council **RESOLVED** to apply for a National Lottery Grant for £3,000 for the Coronation celebrations. Cllrs S McCanlis and L Thornton to complete application online.

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

- xiii. **To RECEIVE an update on the PVTA grant application following meeting with PVTA where it was agreed to defer any decision to March Full Council meeting.**

Cllr L Thornton explained that four PPC Councillors had attended a meeting with the PVTA on 31st January 2023 to discuss various issues relating to the PVTA Grant. From 1st April, the PVTA will no longer exist, replaced by Porlock Vale Community Interest Company (PVCIC), a not-for-profit company registered on Companies House in 2022. PPC wish to understand how this change will affect the Visitor Centre and/or any other activities the PVCIC want to engage in. PPC wish to support a Visitor Information Centre to market and support tourism for the benefit of the businesses in Porlock and a Council Information Point or Community Hub to support the Parish as a whole. How best to do this is being considered.

At the meeting, PPC had asked some questions which the PVTA had asked them to submit in writing after the meeting for them to respond to. The discussions are, therefore, ongoing and it was decided by the PVTA and PPC at the meeting to defer any decision until the March Full Council meeting.

11. PLANNING

To APPROVE the Minutes and recommendations of the Planning Committee Meeting held on the 1st February 2023

Cllr D Thornton summarised the decisions recommended to Full Council from the Planning meeting, explaining that the response required by ENP is Support, No objection, or Object :

- a) **WTPO 23/01 STABLE COTTAGE, BOSSINGTON STABLES, PORLOCK, TA24 8HB**
Recommendation : No objection
- b) **6/27/23/001 FLAT, WHEELHOUSE GALLERY, HIGH STREET, PORLOCK, TA24 8PY**
Recommendation : to Support

- c) **6/27/23/002 GREENCOMBE, PORLOCK WEIR ROAD, PORLOCK, SOMERSET, TA24 8NU**
Recommendation : to Support
- d) **6/27/23/003 MOUNT BALLAN, THE RIDGE, PORLOCK, MINEHEAD, TA24 8HA**
Recommendation : No objection

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes and the recommendations therein of the Planning Committee Meeting held on the 1st February 2023

PROPOSER: Cllr D Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr M Mariner. ALL IN FAVOUR.

Cllrs L Thornton and S Colson did not vote to approve the Minutes as non-committee members.

The Clerk thanked the Planning Committee for meeting following proper procedures with Public Participation. Cllr D McCanlis noted that one member of the public, an applicant, attended.

Cllr Nicholson advised that, currently, only if the response was to 'object', would a planning application go to committee. Changes to this process are being considered so that a response of 'object' would not necessarily take it to committee.

12. To ADOPT NALC Model SO, to be signed by the Chair at the meeting.

Cllr L Thornton explained that there was confusion over what was approved at FC in July as the office copy is still marked DRAFT, is unsigned and dated 14th September 2022. It also appeared that the starting document was not the most up-to-date one provided by SALC in April 2022. It was therefore recommended that the Council start anew with the latest version of the NALC Model SO. It was noted that 6 months had passed since the decision in July 2022, so a new decision could be taken. However, the Clerk advised that she, the RFO and the Chair needed more time to ensure the SO were appropriate for PPC and to allow all Councillors to consider the recommendations. It was therefore decided to defer adopting the changes in full until the March FC meeting. However, it was proposed to agree and adopt one change to the existing SO, to be included in the new SO, whereby the quorum for a committee or sub-committee should be 'at least 3' as in the NALC Model SO. This was felt more appropriate given the number of Councillors in total currently, being only seven.

Council **RESOLVED** to defer adopting the NALC Model SO in full, agreeing to adopt the change to the number of committee or sub-committee members needed for a quorum to 3.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR

13. To ADOPT NALC Model Code of Conduct

Cllr L Thornton explained that there was again confusion over what was approved at FC in July as the office copy is still marked DRAFT, is unsigned and it was unclear if this is the latest version.

Council **RESOLVED** to adopt anew the latest NALC Model Code of Conduct.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

14. To APPROVE the Terms of Reference for the portfolio groups

Cllr L Thornton explained that whilst a lot of work had been done, these were still a 'work in progress' so approval would be deferred to the March FC meeting.

15. To RECEIVE an update on the Finance Committee Regulations and Terms of Reference

Cllr L Thornton explained that the RFO and FinCom Chair/Clerk would be working on these to be adopted at March meeting before the end of financial year and start of Audit. Cllr D McCanlis added that the current Regulations and TOR do not meet all current requirements, for example, online banking. It was advised that new NALC Model ones may be coming in the next year, so a further review may be needed at a later date.

16. To RECEIVE an update on the Planning Committee Terms of Reference

The current TOR for the Planning Committee still appear to be draft and need rewriting as using a member of the public as a consultant is not appropriate.

SCC Cllr S Pugsley reported that ENP had now employed more planners to deal with planning matters more quickly and consistently. The same planners will also deal with enforcement.

ENP are to start charging for pre-advice from 1st April, thought to be circa £100.

The constitution for Planning is still being drafted for the new Unitary Authority but ENP will continue to be the Planning Authority for Porlock.

17. To RECEIVE an update on Asset Review and Risk Management review.

It was noted that a lot of work has been done on this in the past month as the Asset Register was very out of date and incomplete. This is an AGAR 'statement' so is a priority to complete before the end of this financial year and before start of Audit. The process has been established and the fixed assets are being reviewed. PPC intend to approve the Asset Register and Business Risk documents at the FC meeting in March.

18. To RECEIVE an update on the Annual Cycle

The Annual Cycle continues to be developed and reviewed, and PPC will start using this from 1 April 2023.

19. To RECEIVE an update on the implementation of recommendations from RFO Review

As FinCom Chair and volunteer Clerk, Cllr L Thornton confirmed that she had started working on a draft response, looking at all the recommendations, of which there are many, noting what had already been or was being put in place to meet all of the recommendations. This response should be completed for approval at the March FC meeting before the end of the financial year and start of next audit.

20. To RECEIVE an update on the recruitment for the Clerk.

Cllr S McCanlis confirmed that the HR & Staffing Committee were meeting on Friday 10th February at 12 noon in the Parish Room to discuss the applications received, agree the Interview Panel and invite applicants for interview. The Committee will make recommendations to FC who will approve or otherwise the appointment at March FC meeting on 8.3.23

21. To APPOINT further representatives to outside bodies.

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Stephen Colson to be the PPC representative to the PVTA/PVCIC.
PROPOSER: Cllr S McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Stephen Colson to be the PPC representative to Coastal Communities.
PROPOSER: Cllr S McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Duncan McCanlis to be the PPC representative to Doverly Manor.
PROPOSER: Cllr S McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

22. To RECEIVE correspondence.

None had been received

23. To RECEIVE reports from outside bodies: Coastal Communities, Doverly Manor, Highways, Porlock Library, Porlock Vale Tourist Association, Porlock Weir, Recreation Ground, St. Dubricius First School, Village Hall.

Doverly Manor

Cllrs L Thornton and D McCanlis reported that they had attended the Doverly Manor Museum AGM but had not been invited to stay for the committee meeting. Cllr D McCanlis noted that there was a Doverly Manor Management Committee, a Museum committee and a Billiards committee.

Highways

Cllr M Mariner confirmed he was receiving Road Closure Notices having subscribed to the emails. SCC Councillors confirmed the Highways Steward as Tim Williams. The Clerk will send details onto Cllr Mariner from Sam Murrell's emails.

Recreation Ground

The Pavilion Project is continuing. The Children's Playground is closed for the fitting of replacement equipment, hopefully opening in time for half-term. The affiliated clubs will no longer be charged rent which will help sports clubs to develop. Interest from the investment will be used to help cover some running costs.

Porlock Weir

Cllr S McCanlis reported that more businesses are opening with half term approaching

Porlock Community Library

Cllr D Thornton reported that the Library lending rates for physical books were 55% of pre-covid rates. As a Band D library they are not part of the 'Fast Track' scheme to receive new publications. The Library would like to promote/encourage borrowing by finding a more flexible way to acquire and loan new publications. Two ipads are available for loan, both currently being borrowed.

The full report is on the PPC website.

St. Dubricius First School

Cllr S McCanlis had not received any update but Cllr Frances Nicholson was able to report, as a School governor and co-chair of the Moorland Federation of Schools, that a new head, Jo Smith, had been appointed for St. Dubricius First School. Hannah Sparks will stay on being involved in curriculum development and teaching. More liaison with families is being developed. St. Dubricius is a member of the Moorland Federation with Naomi Philps as the Executive Headteacher.

No other reports received.

24. To NOTE next Finance Committee meeting time/date/place

Weds 22nd Feb at 6pm in Parish Room.

25. To NOTE the date and time of the next Full Council meeting.

Weds 8th March at 7pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting ended at 9.34pm

Signed:

Date: