

Frithelstock Parish Council

Clerk and RFO: Alan Matthewman
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Members Present Cllrs C Stevens (chairman) A Hardwick, Bob Lewis-Basson, E Hunkin and John Burrill

**Also Present: Alan Matthewman (Clerk/RFO),
Two members of the public**

In accordance with The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public are welcome to attend. Proceedings of the meeting will be recorded by the Clerk to help in the production and veracity of the minutes. All persons speaking at the meeting consent to having their words recorded for this purpose. The recording will be deleted by the Clerk once the minutes have been voted as a true and accurate version of proceedings.

Agenda item number:

5: Council agreed to bring forward the election of chair and vice-chair to the commencement of the meeting.

The clerk invited nominations for the position of chair of the council for the period 2024-25. Cllr Stevens stated that he could no longer take up the office as the year in question would see him absent from a number of meetings for business and personal reasons.

Cllr Hardwick proposed that Cllr Burrill be appointed, seconded by Cllr Hunkin, which was approved unanimously. Proposed by Cllr Burrill, seconded by Cllr Hardwick, that Cllr Hunkin continue in post as Vice-Chair for a further year. Both electees confirmed their willingness to sign consent to serve notices to be tabled at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned to allow for public participation and outside reports, if any.

1. Public Participation

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business relating to the Parish Council as indicated in the agenda. A question asked by a member of the public during this period shall not require a response or debate at the meeting. Once the formal meeting is declared open then no non-member shall be entitled to speak except on the express invitation of the chair.

Upon invitation from the acting chair, one member of the public asked to reserve any comments until the item regarding the playing fields came up if that was acceptable to the chair. The second member raised issues regarding the heading of the agenda referring to online links to the meeting which was no longer relevant as the proceedings were no longer carried online. Accepted with apologies by the clerk. He went on to criticize the departing chair for his statement at the Parish Meeting that nothing had happened during the year.

It was also stated that there was an omission that at the Parish Meeting the current trustee should have laid before the meeting accounts for the village hall. The clerk queried this as the single trustee had no power to ensure the accounts were available at the appropriate time.

It was pointed out that at the next meeting there should be an agenda item to approve a trustee for the Poor Lands Charity.

2. Reports from Outside Bodies

No reports received

The formal meeting shall be declared open and the restriction as to who can speak shall come into effect.

3. Apologies for absence

Councillor Thomas had apologised on account of work commitments

4: Declarations of interest

To receive any Declarations of interest and DPI's. Members are reminded that all interests must be declared at the beginning of the meeting and prior to the item being discussed.

5: Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council for 2024-25

See above.

6: Resignation of Member

The Chairman reported that he had received the resignation from the council of Councillor Sam Wood due to increased work commitments. He had accepted the resignation with regret, this meaning that the Council now had one vacancy available.

7: Minutes of Previous Meeting

To approve and sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2024. Those present at the meeting confirmed that the minutes were a true record and the signature of the fact was held over until the next meeting as the chair of the meeting was not present.

8: Matters Arising: To consider any matters arising from the minutes not dealt with in the current agenda. None considered relevant for discussion at this meeting.

9: Computer and IT Issues

The current council laptop operates on Windows Vista, an operating system that Microsoft has not supported since 2017, just one year after the machine was acquired. It is slow and erratic and a few weeks ago became entirely non-functional for a brief period of time. The clerk confirmed to the meeting that, when he was first presented with the machine in October 2023, he informed the chair that, in his view, the machine was long past its operational date and should be retired. This was declined at the time, since when the clerk had been involved in many additional hours of work for which he had received no payment.

A continuation of the current situation was untenable and, based on a recommendation from a senior councillor at Winkleigh, where a similar situation existed, a high-quality refurbished business machine had been acquired from Celebrity Technology in Bovey Tracey. This had proved a true success and based on this the clerk requested that a budget of £500 be set aside for a replacement machine from the same supplier.

This precipitated a debate on the nature and whereabouts of data kept by the council and the revelation that there was a filing cabinet, the contents of which no-one knew and the whereabouts of the key was equally unknown. Cllr Lewis-Basson then launched into a statement regarding a lack of response to his emails enquiring about certain technical specs on the proposed new machine. After a heated series of statements, the clerk, in an attempt to diffuse the situation, offered to approach the owner of Celebrity Technology to set up a conversation between himself and Cllr Lewis-Basson to see if the challenges could be bridged.

The Acting Chair asked for a proposal to spend up to £500 to acquire a replacement computer, proposed by Cllr Hunkin and seconded by Cllr Burrill after he had made a number of reservations regarding his terms of trade.

10: Planning Issues

A single item had been received on the day of the meeting. The application was for a training centre, and ultimately the desire to build a school for children with disabilities. The current application was for a small temporary centre, whilst the application for a larger building went ahead. The commitment was that, if the larger development was refused permission, then this initial application would lapse and be removed.

11: Matters Concerning the Playing Field and Grass Cutting

To determine the final outcome of the situation and costings for the current year. The breakdown of costs re the new contractors is as follows: churchyard £1200 and cemetery £550, playing field £1000, and village green £200. He had been asked to complete the initial cut before the first events went ahead. The Chair undertook to follow up to make sure it happened.

12: Litter Picking

Report on updated position. A small group of 8 had come together who had picked about 60kg, a total reduced by the long grass which made collection difficult.

13: Website

Update on current situation and options: Councillor Lewis-Basson to report.

He summarized the defects of the existing site which was not maintained by the author and not accessible to councillors or others to update. Cllr Lewis-Basson confirmed he had made a start in looking at a new set-up to make it more accessible.

14: Payments and Receipts to date and report on Bank Situation

To approve Payment and Receipts made/received since last meeting. To authorize expenditure to be made before next meeting

Update on bank situation.

15: To consider and approve Agar Certification

- a) To approve finance statement and year end balances
- b) To agree Governance statement to be forwarded to Internal Auditor
- c) To note the internal audit certificate which will be completed by the auditor
- d) To note and agree updated versions of the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Asset Register, Risk Assessment.
- e) To approve the timetable for public access to accounts and other documentation.

Proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded by Cllr Burrill, all the above items were approved unanimously and the Chair and Clerk/RFO were authorized to sign them where required.

16: Urgent matters raised by Councillors for information or for inclusion on future Agenda

Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the Agenda and to raise items for future Agendas. Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.

Councillor Stevens to report on a letter received from the Chair of Winkleigh Parish Council with a proposal that Parish Council Chairs in the Torridge District should meet with a view to co-ordinating actions with Torridge Planning Group to improve their combined influence. Council to discuss and advise.

Councillor Hunkin was concerned as to how this would be interpreted and whether it might lead to conflicts between parish councils or indeed between the parishes and TDC Planning.

Part B. Exclusion of Press and Public for the following item

That the following item under Section 1(2) of the public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it involved likely disclosure of confidential information

No items scheduled under this section

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 17th July 2024 at 7.00pm in the village hall.

Councillor Chris Stevens

Chair

Frithelstock Parish Council

Wednesday 15th May 2024