

## HALSE PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025 at 6:30 pm IN THE CAFÉ OF THE NEW INN COMMUNITY PUB

Present:	Mr I Walker	Chair
	Mrs Sylvia Haselock	
	Mr L Morris	Footpaths
	Cllr Gwil Wren	Somerset Councillor
	Mrs C Windeatt	Clerk to the Council
Members of the Public in attendance:	Mr C Kinch	

	<p><b>Report from County Councillor:</b></p> <p>Gwil Wren addressed the meeting, giving an update on the reorganisation with Somerset Council. The key points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SC are endeavouring avoid Section 114 notice. It is anticipated the deficit of £70m-£80m will be reduced to a deficit of £35m, following the rationalisation plans underway, including council employee redundancies. The compulsory redundancy scheme will commence in early February.</li><li>• SC have applied to Government to increase council tax by 5% and are awaiting a response.</li><li>• SC are planning capitalisation to further reduce the deficit; awaiting government approval.</li><li>• It is anticipated that if the above are successful this will reduce the deficit, but this will not be eliminated.</li><li>• 75% of the council budget is spent on adult and children's social care.</li></ul> <p>GW informed the meeting of the devolution of services plan, with particular reference to highways maintenance. Keir is the nominated SC highways maintenance contractor. Although some parishes and Town Councils will be able to take on management of highways within their parishes/towns, it is seen as impractical for small parishes such as Halse, to take over management of this service at this stage. As reorganisation within the council is still in process, devolving the responsibilities for the maintenance of footpaths is also unresolved. The Chair, IW, commented that both highways and footpath maintenance has an impact on the Halse budget and precept, and thanked GW for attending the meeting and for the information given.</p> <p>GW's final comments were on the Somerset Local Plan. Central government have advised SC that the number of new homes required per year over the next 5 years has increased from 2,500 per annum to 3,500 per annum. SC are holding a meeting in Taunton on 24 February to discuss the Local Plan, and are requesting councils, house builders, landowners to identify possible house building sites.</p> <p><b>Public Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>
1.	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ms Kathryn Robinson-Burge</li><li>• Cllr Dave Mansell</li></ul>
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>

Signed.....I.J. WALKER.....Date 16 April 2025

3.	<b>Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting be approved, proposed by IW and seconded by SH.</li></ul>																											
4.	<b>Actions from Previous Meetings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It was confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting have been executed. Any outstanding matters will be discussed at this meeting.</li></ul>																											
5. 5.1  5.2	<b>Co-option to fill Casual Vacancy on Parish Council</b> <b>Approval of co-option of Cameron Kinch</b> LM proposed the co-option of Cameron Kinch, it was seconded by SH, and approved by the Council. IW, LM, SH and the Clerk welcomed Cameron Kinch as a Councillor, to the meeting. <b>Signature and witnessing of statutory documentation</b> CK signed the Declaration of Office form, which was witnessed by the Chair, IW. CK signed the General Notice of Registrable Interests form <b>Action:</b> Clerk to forward General Notice of Registrable Interests to the Monitoring Officer at Somerset West																											
6. 6.1	<b>Unitary Authority</b> Update – Please see Cllr Gwill Wren’s comments at the start of these minutes.																											
7. 7.1	<b>Finance</b> <b>Schedule of Payments</b> The following payments have been made between 29/11/2024 and 15/01/25: <table><tr><td>Halse Village Hall</td><td>Grant – insurance</td><td>£985.00</td></tr><tr><td>C Windeatt</td><td>Clerk’s fee (Oct – Dec)</td><td>£476.38</td></tr><tr><td>HMRC</td><td>PAYE deductions</td><td>£119.00</td></tr><tr><td>C Windeatt</td><td>Clerk’s Dec expenses</td><td>£ 26.64</td></tr><tr><td>SW Ambulance Service</td><td>Defib (1)</td><td>£840.00</td></tr><tr><td>Halse Village Hall</td><td>Hall Hire</td><td>£ 24.00</td></tr><tr><td>Hugo Fox</td><td>Website fees (back dated)</td><td>£179.82</td></tr><tr><td>PJ Signs Taunton</td><td>EV Sign</td><td>£ 30.00</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"><b>Total of payments</b></td><td><b>£2,680.84</b></td></tr></table> <b>Balance in the current account as at 15/01/2025</b> <b>£18,220.71</b>	Halse Village Hall	Grant – insurance	£985.00	C Windeatt	Clerk’s fee (Oct – Dec)	£476.38	HMRC	PAYE deductions	£119.00	C Windeatt	Clerk’s Dec expenses	£ 26.64	SW Ambulance Service	Defib (1)	£840.00	Halse Village Hall	Hall Hire	£ 24.00	Hugo Fox	Website fees (back dated)	£179.82	PJ Signs Taunton	EV Sign	£ 30.00	<b>Total of payments</b>		<b>£2,680.84</b>
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7.2	<b>Budget</b> The draft budget was discussed at the November Council Meeting, and following that meeting various redrafts had been circulated to Cllrs for their information and consideration. Following the information given at this meeting by Cllr Wren, the budget for 2025/26 was discussed and agreed. IW proposed approval of the budget, SH seconded, and approval was given by Cllrs.																											
7.3	<b>Precept</b> As a result of the approval of the 2025/26 budget, it was agreed that a 2% inflation increase would be applied to the precept for the forthcoming year. The 2024/25 precept amounted to £8,200, the precept for 2025/26 will be £8,364. IW proposed the precept increase of 2%, LM seconded, and it was approved by Cllrs. <b>Action:</b> Clerk to completed the Somerset Council precept form on behalf of Halse Parish Council and submit to the Council prior to the deadline of 31/01/25. – <b>Completed 28/01/25</b>																											

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8.	<p><b>Preston Solar Farm</b></p> <p>IW had a meeting with the Innova representatives today, 27/01/25, when the future plans for developing the site were discussed. IW was introduced to the project managers. IW was advised that Innova have an investor and the anticipated start date for construction is October 2025. One local resident in Preston Bowyer has objected to the positioning of the compound for the storage of the construction materials, which falls in the Milverton Parish. IW reported that as yet Milverton PC have not signed the agreement splitting the community benefit payments due to Halse PC and Milverton PC in relation to the solar farm. IW also advised that central government is endeavouring to ensure a 'level playing field' when it comes to community benefit payments in respect of solar farms. Halse PC will renegotiate payments from Innova if central government secure an uplift on the current agreed payment per KWh.</p>
9. 9.1	<p><b>Roads and Footpaths</b></p> <p><b>Highways Report – circulated prior to the meeting via email by IW:</b></p> <p>There are no new issues to report. There will be work undertaken by Wessex Water on 30/31 Jan on Whitmore Lane. A notice has been put out to the village regarding the temporary road closure.</p> <p>Minutes from a recent meeting of the local LCN Highways sub committee highlights just how much is entailed in the PC being enabled to conduct work on the Highways which was previously undertaken by SC. It does not give any indication of how long it would take to gain permission to do the work but if SC Highways are already stretched doing admin and every PC wants an agreement it is anticipated that long delays will result.</p> <p>It is also interesting from the precept point of view, as it makes it clear that, whilst we might want to create reserves to do the work, spending it will be really hard. In an emergency it might be hoped assistance will be more forthcoming. However, the recent road blockage near Halse Water following storms showed a complete lack of interest from the SC.</p> <p>The bank at Sunnyside, opposite Willow Cottage and the entrance to the New Inn remains in an unstable condition. The owner of Sunnyside is continuing to raise this issue with Highways Department at SC</p>
9.2	<p><b>Footpaths Report</b></p> <p>LM reported back on the cost of sourcing finger posts to signpost footpaths within the parish. Cost will be £55 each excluding VAT, and will be sourced from Milverton wood yard. LM and CK agreed to liaise on this work, which will be undertaken in the spring. The recent footpath clearance work highlighted 7 missing posts. Approval was given to purchase 10 posts.</p> <p>LM reported that Mr Upton of Manor Farm, has volunteered to clear the footpath adjacent to Tugwell Farm.</p>
10.	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <p>There have been two site visits since the last meeting, Little Paddocks 18/24/0011 and Blakes Garden Cottage 18/25/0001. IW, as Chair signed the minutes relating to these planning applications for the minute book.</p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to advise SC Planning of the Council's comments relating to 18/25/0001 – Completed 28/01/25</b></p>
11.	<p><b>Grants</b></p> <p>No applications had been received.</p>

12.	<b>Clerk's Report</b> The clerk had circulated her report prior to the meeting, and all items on the report were discussed at this meeting: schedule of payments, budget and precept. The clerk confirmed that a Reserve Account with NatWest has now been set up and monies will be transferred into this account to accrue interest on a monthly basis.
13.	<b>Matters of Report including:</b>
13.1	<b>Village Hall Report</b> – The clerk reported that the Halse Village Hall trustees are in the process of applying for a decarbonisation grant. As part of this process they have been granted a free survey. The surveyor will visit the hall on 05/02/25, and advise on decarbonisation improvements. As part of this process villagers and hall users will be requested to complete a decarbonisation questionnaire which also covers hall usage. Following the above two actions, the trustees will complete the grant application. Grants up to £20,000 are available to decarbonise village halls.
13.2	<b>Police Report</b> – The PCSO's report had been circulated prior to the meeting. PCSO Whelan confirmed to the clerk that If there is anything reported in Halse that affects the wider community then she will add it onto her reports.
13.3	<b>Other</b> – No other reports.
14.	<b>Date of Next Meeting :</b> Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 – 6:30 pm – Halse Village Hall
15.	<b>Items for the next meeting :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft year end accounts</li> <li>• Date to be set for the Annual Meeting in May</li> <li>• Dates to be set for council meetings for the 2025/26 financial year</li> </ul>

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