

## HALSE PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025 at 6:30 pm IN HALSE VILLAGE HALL

Present:	Mr I Walker	Chair
	Mrs S Haselock	
	Mr L Morris	Footpaths
	Mr C Kinch	Footpaths
	Ms K Robinson Burge	Vice Chair
	Cllr Gwil Wren	Somerset Councillor
	Mrs C Windeatt	Clerk to the Council
Members of the Public in attendance:	None	

#### **Report from County Councillor:**

Gwil Wren addressed the meeting, giving an update on the reorganisation within Somerset Council. The key points are:

- SC managed to balance the books. They had requested permission from Government to increase council tax by 22.5%, which was declined. Permission was given to increase by 2.5% above the normal allowable increase. This will result in £100 million deficit at the end of the current financial year. 500 people have been made redundant, however SC believe there will be no loss of services to the public.
- Restructuring within departments have taken place, but Cllr Wren advised that the proposed staffing cuts to the Highways and Structures departments have been reversed and it is hoped that problems reported to these departments will now be resolved more speedily.
- The Chair requested a definitive answer to the works that parish council will in future be responsible for commissioning (clearing gulleys, repairing potholes). Cllr Wren reported that it is hope the commissioning issues will be resolved at an LCN meeting to be held in late April.
- CK asked Cllr Wren whether SC will be bankrupt at the end of the current financial year. Cllr Wren advised that following the restructuring the of SC in the 2024/25 financial year, when the SC were permitted to sell assets, the reserves are now at the minimum permitted, and no further staff reduction, without loss of services will be feasible, so bankruptcy during this financial year is a real threat, unless Government resolve the ongoing financial problems facing councils. Cllr Wren reported over 30 councils are in a similar position to SC this year.
- LM wish to put forward two areas where SC and Government could save money: (a) Increasing the length of ownership of motability vehicles from 3 years to 9 years (b) reviewing the transportation costs for special needs children from home to school by reducing the need for a carer to accompany each child on the journey by allowing the approved driver to act as chaperone, and collecting more than one child per journey, which is often the case at the moment. Cllr Wren thanked LM for the suggestions.

#### **Public Questions**

- None

1.

#### **Apologies for Absence**

- Cllr Dave Mansell

Signed.....Date .....

2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>												
3.	<b>Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January ,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting be approved, proposed by SH and seconded by LM.</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	<b>Finance</b> <b>Schedule of payments</b> – Payment totalling £1052.42 were made since the previous meeting, and £659.11 received. Approval was given for the payment to SALC for the annual subscription fee in the sum of £143.25. The clerk advised the meeting a monthly direct debit to Hugo Fox for the parish council website is now actioned, in the sum of £11.99.												
5.2	<b>Draft accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025</b> The draft accounts had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting for their information. These accounts show a carry forward figure of £17869.03. The councillors approved the accounts. The reserves shown in the accounts are as follows: <table border="1" data-bbox="284 952 1441 1283"> <tr> <td>Earmarked reserve (2023 CIL Monies - EV Chargers)</td><td>3,091.07</td></tr> <tr> <td>CIL monies received in 2024</td><td>3,144.57</td></tr> <tr> <td>Earmarked reserves: footpaths and highways</td><td>8,033.39</td></tr> <tr> <td>General Fund reserve (6 months expenditure)</td><td>3,600.00</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td><b>£</b></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td><b>17,869.03</b></td></tr> </table> <p>The clerk advised the meeting that the AGAR forms have been prepared in readiness for the annual audit of the PC accounts.</p> <p>As at 16 April 2025 the bank balance stands at £26233.03. This figure reflects the 2025/26 precept received from Somerset Council in the sum of £8364.00</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Clerk to give the accounting records to Keith Hunt, who is acting as the internal auditor for the 2024/25 accounts.</p>	Earmarked reserve (2023 CIL Monies - EV Chargers)	3,091.07	CIL monies received in 2024	3,144.57	Earmarked reserves: footpaths and highways	8,033.39	General Fund reserve (6 months expenditure)	3,600.00		<b>£</b>		<b>17,869.03</b>
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6. 6.1	<b>Preston Solar Farm</b> <b>Update on Community Benefit Fund</b> The Chair advised the meeting that he had received a message to say that the construction start date has been brought forward from October to August 2025.												
7. 7.1	<b>Roads and Footpaths</b> <b>Highways Report – circulated prior to the meeting via email by IW:</b> Inhabitants of <b>Stoford Lane</b> reported a deterioration in their road surface due to large pot holes. IW submitted a report on their behalf and IW was pleased to report Somerset Council reacted quickly and the worst of these have already been filled.												

Signed.....Date .....

7.2	<p>In the interest, firstly, of the tenants living in <b>New Cottage and Sunnyside</b> (opposite the pub carpark entrance) IW has written to the landlady of both properties. IW advised her that, although SC Highways are not responding to her emails, they have made it quite clear to IW that the issue of the garden at Sunnyside slowly slipping into the road is her responsibility.</p> <p><b>Halse Water Bridge.</b> There has been no progress by “Structures” on the issue of damage to the bridge and more stones have fallen from the wall into the road since the last meeting. IW wrote again to Structures in mid-March with new photos, followed up at the end of the month and still no reply. The resident of Halse Water has recently reported the problem again to Paul Tucker of Somerset Council and also had no reply. Cllr Gwil Wren confirmed he would again progress this matter on the PC’s behalf to the best of his abilities.</p> <p><b>Finger Posts</b> – The PC has received a complaint from Angela Brook, Traffic Engineering Public Liaison Officer at Somerset Council concerning the paints used on the finger posts in the centre of the village. Extract of email as follows: ‘<i>However as part of our heritage it is important that we respect the historical aspect and they therefore need to refurbish in the authorised colours of a grey post and white with black writing.</i>’ IW had drafted a response to Ms Brook’s email, which he shared with the meeting before forwarding to Somerset Council.</p> <p><b>Footpaths Report</b> LM had requested information from residents regarding the state of fingerposts and footpaths via the local news network, and had a conversation with one resident regarding footpaths which are currently impassable. An action plan has been formulated between LM, CK and KRB to firstly renew missing fingerposts, and secondly to tackle the overgrown footpaths. <b>Action:</b> LM to order new fingerposts from local supplier. LM and CK to install new fingerposts with footpath marker signs attached. LM, CK and KRB to clear impassable footpaths as time permits</p> <p>An incident of fly tipping on a footpath within the parish had been reported. General discussion took place concerning this problem. The issue had been reported to Somerset Council by a local resident, but it is unlikely any action will be taken by SC as the rubbish had been dumped on private land. CK will discuss with the landowner.</p>
8. 8.1	<p><b>Planning</b> <b>Report on planning and related matters</b> One site visit took place since the last meeting, at Cornflower Cottage (formation of a driveway and 2 no parking spaces). The Council supported this application.</p> <p>Planning for the creation of vehicular access at Blakes Garden Cottage was supported by the PC at a site visit on 25 January 2025, but not approved by Somerset Council. The Chair wrote to Somerset Council Planning following SC’s decision not to approve. On appeal, the vehicular access was approved, and is currently being constructed.</p> <p>KRB highlighted a construction by Wessex Water in the area adjacent to Greedy’s Orchard as it appears a new structure has been constructed, however the PC had not received any notification regarding this. The Chair agreed to take this up with Wessex Water</p>

Signed.....Date .....

	<b>Action:</b> Chair to write to Wessex Water. KRB to supply photo of the structure to aid the enquiries.
9.	<b>Grants</b> No applications had been received.
10.	<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. The date for the annual meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 14 May 2025. This will be followed by an ordinary meeting. Items on the agenda for the ordinary meeting will be: (a) review of risk assessment (b) AGAR audit forms
11.	<b>Matters of Report including:</b>
11.1	<b>Village Hall Report</b> – The draft year end accounts for Halse Village Hall have been prepared, which show a small revenue surplus. The hall continues to be regularly used by villagers. The VH AGM is set for Tuesday 6 May, at 7:00 pm.
11.2	<b>Police Report</b> – The PCSO's report had been circulated prior to the meeting. PCSO Whelan confirmed there were no incidents with the Halse PC vicinity to report.
11.3	<b>Other</b> – No other reports.
12.	<b>Date of Next Meeting :</b> Wednesday 14 May at 7:00 pm (following on from the Annual Meeting Venue : Halse Village Hall
13.	<b>Items for the next meeting :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AGAR audit forms</li> <li>• Review of Risk Assessment Schedule</li> <li>• Dates to be set for council meetings for the 2025/26 financial year</li> </ul>

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