

Burlescombe Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of Burlescombe Parish Council
on Monday 4 November 2024 at Burlescombe

Prior to the meeting, the three individuals who had put themselves forward for the three vacant positions on the Parish Council and, having been duly elected in an uncontested election, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was duly witnessed by the Clerk.

Councillor Palmer had resigned prior to the meeting creating another vacancy on the Parish Council.

Present: Councillors Box, Downing, Forward (Chair), McDonald, Smith and Walker and Acting Parish Clerk, Mrs McGeever was also present.

Councillor Forward opened the meeting at 7pm and welcomed everyone and noted for the benefit of those present that the meeting was being filmed.

04112024/1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from MDDC Councillor Westcott and DCC Councillor Radford.

Councillors Box, McDonald and Walker gave a brief presentation on their association with the parish and a resume of their work experience. Councillor McDonald advised that he was the husband of Councillor Smith.

04112024/2 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

The new Councillors were advised that they would need to complete the Register of Interest form to be published on Mid Devon District Council's website.

There were no declarations of interests or dispensations requested with regard to the business on the agenda.

04112024/3 Minutes of Previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 7 October 2024 had been circulated to all councillors. Given that Councillors Downing and Smith were the only councillors who had been present at that meeting, Councillor Downing proposed and Councillor Smith seconded the proposal that the decisions made be ratified and that the minutes were a true record of meeting. There were four abstentions. The Chair initialled and signed the minutes.

04112024/4 Public Participation

The Chair advised that public participation was limited to 15 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes per person.

- A welcome was given to the new councillors and a request made that the precept be raised to cover increased costs. It was noted that the precept had decreased by 12.2% and 12.8% over the past two years. An increase in precept of 25% was put forward which was £8 per month.
- Parking at Henson Drive was raised and concerns expressed over the parking taking place on the junction.
- The road markings at the school were raised and the view expressed that the current give-way and hatchings at the school were not practical and had the potential to bring traffic to a standstill. Rather than have them re-painted, consideration should be given to their removal.

The Chair noted the items raised which, if on the agenda, would be discussed at this meeting or, if not, put on the agenda of the next meeting.

04112024/5 Matters arising from the last minutes

The Chair noted that with the change of councillors, there would need to be changes to the composition of the Amenities Working Group and this, with any other changes to appointments, would be included on the next agenda.

The Amenities Working Group need to look at all amenities in the village, the priority being Westleigh Play Park which the Parish Council was due to take over from Mid Devon District Council before the end of the financial year.

There was also work to be done on the Old Railway Line (ORL) part of which, from Blackbridge to Burlescombe belonged to the Parish Council/Parish.

Councillor Downing noted that it might be worthwhile contacting the Clerk at Holcombe Rogus where village fund raising had resulted in new play equipment.

Councillor Downing suggested that once Amenity Working Group was back to full strength, a walk of the ORL take place.

Councillor Downing would look to organise a litter pick at the end of November/early December as she had in the past. The equipment was supplied by Mid Devon District Council who also collected the rubbish. The litter pick normally took place between 11am and 1pm. Details of the litter pick would then be put on social media.

It was noted that the FVEG would be undertaking a litter pick in April.

Councillor Downing was asked to bring a proposal for the litter pick to the December meeting outlining the practicalities of running it and the support needed.

Councillor Downing also raised the matter of Park Wood and whether the Parish Council should continue to upkeep the land as it was not owned by the Parish Council and no longer used by the school. The area was not in a good state being very boggy and wet and the path was impassable. The Amenities Working Group would consider the matter and bring a recommendation to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council RESOLVED to purchase a wreath for the Remembrance Service as shown in the 2024/25 budget.

The Parish Council would investigate the process of establishing Community Speedwatch and this would require a councillor to coordinate the recruitment process.

04112024/6. To elect a new Vice Chair(s)

The Chair advised that the Parish Council wished to represent the whole parish and given that the Chair lived in Westleigh, Councillor Forward felt the Vice-Chair should come from Burlescombe.

Councillor Downing did not wish to be considered for the position given her role as Quarry Representative.

Councillor Walker advised that she would, as the other councillor from Burlescombe, be prepared to take on the role of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Box seconded the proposal that Councillor Walker take on the role of Vice-Chair. The Parish Council RESOLVED that Councillor Walker would be the Vice-Chair with one abstention (Councillor Walker).

04112024/7. To consider and approve adopting core documents in line with NALC model documents

- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations

The three documents had been circulated to all councillors and represented the documents prepared by the National Association of Local Councils.

Standing Orders

The Standing Orders were the most current version from 2023. Items in bold represented statutory requirements which had to be included. The remaining text could be adapted to best represent the method in which the Parish Council operated. The result was to have a document that represented best practice and thus the Parish Council was the best version it could be.

The Acting Parish Clerk explained the terms of Declaration of Interest and Dispensation. The latter had to be requested through the Proper Officer (Clerk) prior to the meeting.

It was noted that there was a recommendation that all planning applications be kept in a book. The Acting Parish Clerk advised an electronic log could be kept but all planning applications were recorded in the agendas and minutes of the Parish Council and were available on Mid Devon District Council's planning portal for each parish. A compromise sometimes had to be judged on hours available and tasks to be undertaken. The general practice was that the Clerk received an application, considered whether an extension of time was required i.e. the consultation end date was prior to the next meeting and then circulated to parish councillors. Extensions were normally granted and planning could form an agenda item at the monthly council meeting. The Parish Council may decide to hold a Planning Meeting if the application was large and would create a great deal of parishioner interest. This was the reason why a Planning Committee had to publish its agendas and minutes to the same timescales as a Parish Meeting so that public involvement took place and any decision was recorded.

Working Groups, on the other hand, did not need to publish agendas and minutes because it could only make recommendations and not take decisions on behalf of the Parish Council. The Parish Council had made the decision that agendas and minutes would be published for the sake of transparency.

Regarding staff policy, the majority of Parish Council's adopted that NALC model contract and put in place policies such as a grievance policy.

The Acting Parish Clerk advised that a lot of smaller Parish Council's did not have a common seal.

Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Downing seconded the proposal that the Parish Council adopt the model standing orders and this was unanimously approved.

Action: Clerk

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct was an established document generally accepted by all Parish Councils and Councillor Forward felt that it should be adopted in full.

Councillor Forward also felt that the Local Government Appendix 1 and the ACAS description of bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination should also be adopted. It was also important to have an equality policy and abide by the seven Nolan principles. Councillor Smith concurred with Councillor Forward.

Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Walker seconded the proposal that the Parish Council adopt the model code of conduct together with the two circulated appendices be adopted and this was unanimously approved.

Action: Clerk

Financial Regulations

The financial regulations set out how the parish council should deal with its finances and adopt best practice. The latest NALC version had been published in May 2024.

Again, statutory requirements were in bold and could not be altered whilst other sections could be adapted to meet the Parish Council's operating procedures.

It was necessary to agree spending limits and these normally bore a relationship to the precept and the general expenditure made by the Parish Council.

In this respect, the Parish Council considered that the Clerk should have the ability to authorise expenditure up to £250 whilst the Clerk and Chair should have the ability to authorise expenditure up to £1000. Normally, all expenditure would be approved at a Parish Council meeting but occasions did arise when emergency work was required to be carried out for health and safety reasons that could not wait for a Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council currently banked with Lloyds and this should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Normally, the transfer of monies between a Parish Council's current and deposit account could be carried out by the Clerk to meet agreed expenditure. Given the size of the precept and general expenditure, a transfer figure of £2000 was considered acceptable.

The new regulations recommended that the Clerk had a Parish Council debit card given the tendency to purchase online as purchases should not be made using the Clerk's or Councillor's personal debit cards and thus it was considered a debit card should be obtained.

It was a statutory requirement that all Clerks were paid using HMRC's PAYE system. To date no evidence had been found that the Parish Council was registered for PAYE and the Clerk would contact HMRC.

The Clerk would normally present quotes/tenders without the names of the companies so that councillors were not aware of the identity of contractor's quotes.

The Finance Regulations should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor McDonald seconded the proposal that the Parish Council adopt the model finance regulations with the sums agreed and this was unanimously approved.

Action: Clerk

Further core documentation will be prepared for the next Parish Council meeting.

Action: Clerk

04112024/8. To receive a report from the Chair on:

Maps of the Parish

Maps of the Parish were available from the Clerk.

Update on the Westleigh Play Park handover

The handover would take place before the end of this financial year. Mid Devon District Council had provided a copy of their risk assessment which would be considered by the Amenities Working Group. The Clerk had identified equipment manufacturers and was obtaining quotes for replacing the existing equipment for insurance purposes.

Action: Clerk

Update on works required at Westleigh Play Park and recreation field

The Clerk was obtaining quotes.

Action: Clerk

Update on signage at Westleigh (footpath/bins)

Information received from Mid Devon District Council indicated that the signage on the footpath had not been placed by them. The sticker on the bin was an MDDC sticker and the Parish Council could request its removal. However, no complaints had been made.

The possibility of a dog bin outside the play park/recreation field area would be investigated by the Clerk.

Action: Clerk

Councillor Training

A 3-hour evening training session with the Devon Association of Local Councils had been arranged for 3 February 2025 to cover the Good Councillor Guide. The training session would be shared with other Parish Councils to reduce the cost.

Action: Clerk

Appointment of a Clerk

There had been no applications received for the position of Clerk. It was noted that there were several vacancies and a possible shortage of clerks in the area. The Parish Council would consider reducing the hours and increasing the hourly rate. The Clerk would undertake some research prior to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

Website / emails

The new gov.uk website and email addresses were up and running but the takeover off the burlescombe.org domain name and associated emails was ongoing.

Action: Clerk

Emails from residents

The Parish Council had received several emails from residents and were looking to respond in due course.

Bus stops

The Clerk had not received a response to her email.

Action: Clerk

Potential parish survey to identify resident's key concerns

This matter would be considered under Item 12.

4/11/2024/9. To consider the Parish Council's response to the following planning applications and receive decision notices:

Planning applications:

24/00635/MFUL

Proposal: Erection of storage and manufacturing unit to include formation of parking area and associated works

Location: Land at NGR 308248 116493 West of Woodlands Business Park Burlescombe Devon Grid Ref: 308248 : 116493

Parish: Burlescombe 06

Following discussion, Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Smith seconded the proposal that the Parish Council would object to the application given that they considered there was insufficient information on the planning portal to make an informed judgement. The proposal was unanimously approved.

Action: Clerk to contact planning officer/upload to portal

24/01432/FULL

Proposal: Change of use of land for the siting of 3 additional traveller pitches to include associated garden areas

Location: Land at NGR 308614 116898 (Corbett) Burlescombe Devon

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 308578 / 116869

Parish: Burlescombe 06

Following discussion, Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Smith seconded the proposal that the Parish Council had no objection to the application given there was no removal of trees, no concerns had been raised and it was re-purposing land. The proposal was approved with one abstention (Councillor Downing).

Action: Clerk to contact planning officer/upload to portal

24/01313/LBC

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for the retention of internal and external alterations to the outbuilding

Location: Rocknell Manor Farm Westleigh Tiverton

Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 305003 / 116674

Parish: Burlescombe 06

Following discussion, Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor McDonald seconded the proposal that the Parish Council had no objection to the application given that this was retrospective and no concerns had been raised. The proposal was unanimously approved.

Action: Clerk to upload to portal

Decision notices:

DAHX/DCC/4358/2023 – 23/10/2024 - REFUSED

Retention of existing deposition and temporary landfill site for the deposition of additional inert waste and a construction waste recycling facility with associated works including temporary buildings, access and landscaping, at Land at Greenway, Uplowman, Tiverton

Councillor Forward noted that the work of the wider community assisted in the refusal of this application.

04112024/10. Highways Matters/Footpaths

a) Parish Council response to the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)

The Parish Council felt that any improvements in public transport should be welcomed albeit that the plan did not really cover rural communities.

b) Parish Council response to the Devon Countrywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Parish Council felt that any improvements the cycling and walking infrastructure should be welcomed albeit that the plan did not directly affect Burlescombe now.

In both instances, Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Downing seconded the proposal that the Parish Council supported the plans and this was unanimously approved.

Action: Clerk

c) Matters pertaining to Burlescombe

Need for a Roads Working Group

It was felt that a Roads Working Group was not required but that a Parish Councillor should be appointed to head up Highways.

Action: Bring forward to next meeting

White lines at the railway bridge and school

Action: Clerk to follow up with DCC Highways and AI

Dip at Whiteball

The Clerk had reported the issue to DCC Highways and it was hoped action would be taken.

Welcome to Devon sign

DCC Highways advised that the sign should not have been removed.

Potholes

Potholes continued to be reported.

Road Warden scheme

Action: Bring forward to next meeting

Snow Warden scheme

Action: Bring forward to next meeting

P3 Scheme (Footpaths)

The Clerk understood that Mr Page would be submitting a bill to the Parish Council.

A response was awaited from DCC.

Action: Clerk

Speed limits in the village

The police had indicated that they would be supportive of lowering the speed limit through Canonsleigh.

The setting up of a community speedwatch scheme would be positive.

Action: Clerk to speak to DCC Highways

Water down hill road in Burlescombe

The Clerk was asked to report water overflowing from the stream which appeared to be blocked.

Action: Clerk to speak to DCC Highways

04112024/11. Financial matters:

Update of obtaining access to the bank account

The Clerk had spent several hours on the phone to Lloyds Bank to sort access to the bank account. The most recent suggestion was that the Clerk apply to be a full signatory on the account and then look to remove and add signatories.

Action: Clerk

Addition of two signatories to the bank account

Following the resignation of Councillor Palmer, Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Smith seconded the proposal that the signatories on the account be:

Councillor Forward

Councillor Box

Councillor Downing and

Councillor Walker

Action: Clerk

Update on financial situation and invoices for payment

Without access to the bank account, it was not possible to provide a true picture of the financial situation.

MDDC ground maintenance contract

The new price for the ground maintenance contract was noted.

Request for grant funding from CHAT

Action: Bring forward to the next meeting

Consideration of the budget and precept

Without access to the bank account, it was not possible to provide a true picture of the budget and potential precept. Bring forward to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

04112024/12. To receive the report from the Communications Officer (see supporting documentation) Councillor Smith had prepared a report which was published with the agenda.

Councillor Smith considered that a survey to ascertain the main concerns of residents would allow people who could not attend meetings to have a voice.

The survey which had been circulated to councillors represented best practice and would allow the Parish Council to better represent residents.

Councillor Smith proposed and Councillor Forward seconded the proposal to conduct a survey of residents and this was unanimously approved.

The survey would be available online and in paper format.

Councillor Box asked that the delivery of fast fibre in the village be considered at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

04112024/13. To receive a report on the Councillor Advocate Scheme/local crime

Given that the current representative had resigned from the Parish Council, the appointment of a Parish Councillor as representative on the scheme was on the agenda.

Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Box seconded the proposal that Councillor McDonald be the representative given his position working for the police. The proposal was approved with one abstention (Councillor McDonald).

04112024/14. To receive a report on the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Given that the current representative had resigned from the Parish Council, the appointment of a Parish Councillor as representative on the committee would be placed on the next agenda.

04112024/15. To receive a report on the Quarries

Given that one of the current representatives had resigned from the Parish Council, the appointment of a second representative would be placed on the next agenda.

04112024/16. To receive a report from MDDC Councillors Westcott and Lock

No report had been received.

04112024/17. To receive a report from DCC Councillor Ray Radford

No report had been received.

04112024/18. Items for next meeting

The following items would be placed on the next agenda:

- Co-option policy
- Staffing policies
- Amenities Working Group
- Budget/Precept
- Quarry liaison representative
- Annual Parish Meeting/Community Showcase
- Litter pick
- Park Wood
- ORL

04112024/19. Dates of the next Parish Council Meetings

The next Parish Council meeting would be on Monday, 2 December 2024 at Westleigh URC.

Councillor Forward closed the meeting at 9.03pm.

Signed _____ Date: _____
Chair