

MINUTES OF NORTON SUB HAMDON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 9th DECEMBER 2024
AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, NORTON VILLAGE HALL

24/2139 PRESENT:

Cllr. S More (Chairman), Cllr. B. Matraves (Vice-Chair), Cllr. J Cole, Cllr. C Riley, Cllr. P Gartrell, Cllr R Reid, Cllr. Mike Hewitson (Unitary Councillor) and Mrs. L. Brooks (Clerk). There was 1 member of the public present.

24/2140 APOLOGIES:

Cllr. J Harris

Cllr. Oliver Patrick (Unitary Councillor)

24/2141 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Nothing to report

24/2142 PUBLIC TIME

24/2142/a Public Time

Nothing to report

24/2142/b P.C.S.O. Report:

Nothing to report

24/21042/c Unitary Councillor report:

Unitary Councillor Mike Hewitson was present. He asked Cllr Riley to keep him updated on the wall repairs at Minchington rec. He talked about Somerset Council exploring the potential for closer working with Dorset and Wiltshire Councils in response to a Government call for further regional devolution. This would help to unlock significant further investment for large-scale projects like transport improvement. He explained that a new Combined Authority would oversee the development of long-term investment plans, drive economic growth and improve public services across the region. The proposed Heart of Wessex region could unlock millions of pounds of additional funding per year. The clerk asked him what impact this would have on parish councils, and he replied that it should have no impact at all. He was asked what was happening with the promised grit bin top up that still hadn't materialised. He said that Highways managers would deliver grit to bins where it was needed until a proper delivery could be arranged. He also announced that it looked like SC would be able to set a balanced budget for 2025-26.

24/2142/d CLT Update:

Cllr Harris was not present therefore no report was available.

24/2142/e HYG Report

Cllr Riley reported that the next meeting was planned for January

24/2142/f Allotments Report

Nothing to report

24/2142/g Bus Service Report

Cllr Harris was not present therefore no report was available.

24/2142/h Allotments

The clerk asked for a set of accounts for the last financial year, that could be logged with the clerk, as the Parish Council are responsible for the allotments. Cllr Matraves reported that he would email a copy across.

Action: Cllr Matraves

24/2143 MINUTES

The Minutes from the November meeting were circulated. They were approved and signed.

Proposed: Cllr. Matraves

Seconded: Cllr. Cole

Agreed unanimously.

24/2144 MATTERS ARISING

24/2144/a Budget and setting of precept

The chair and clerk discussed the budget and explained the reason for the extra costs for Minchington Rec. The clerk clarified that some of these costs were a 'one-off' cost for 2025-26 only as they were to cover legal costs for transfer of asset. The clerk explained what the £17,500 that was being ring-fenced was for (play area replacement equipment fund, bank contingency and highways services). She reported on how she had reached the proposed figures for 2025-26 budget. The chair discussed that we were still waiting for the tax base figures from SC (promised by SC to arrive this week). Once the clerk had them, she would then email the Parish Councillors showing what impact different proposed percentage increases to the precept would have on different housing bands.

Action: Clerk

The precept will be agreed at the January parish council meeting as the clerk does not need to apply for it until the end of January. Clerk to include it on the January agenda.

Action Clerk

24/2144/b **Reminder Consultation on division boundaries for Somerset Council**

The clerk reminded the Parish Councillors that the closing date for the consultation on boundaries closed on the 20th January 2025.

24/2144/c Clerk's update

The clerk updated the parish council on the lack of salt/grit that had been promised from SC to top up the grit bins. She informed them she had been informed that the order had originally been 'forgotten to be placed' by Highways and now they had it but there was a lack of people to deliver it. She also reported on the Somerset Parish Conference that had taken place in Bridgewater. Reports varied considerably between clerks who attended and Somerset Council reports. SC reported that it was a great success whilst clerks reported that it was a complete waste of time and more of a 'good day out' for Somerset Council workers. The clerk also discussed how a clerk from a neighbouring parish had been investigating using local contractors to clear their drains and silts traps as an alternative to using Kier, to see if they could get a better price. She has reported that she has been informed an Assistant Highways manager that we had to use Kier due to liability of claims as Kier would be able to record/report any issues or damage". Clerks have reported back that this would surely be unlawful if we were being prevented from accepting other quotes because of the unlawful barriers being put in the way of the Council. It clearly states in the Highways pilot scheme Q&A - *Can Parish Councils carry out work via a contractor appointed by them instead of commissioning the work via this pilot proposal?* and the answer is: *Yes, absolutely. Parish Councils are not compelled to take part in the pilot offer from Somerset Council and Kier.* Once again, Parish Councils were receiving mixed messages, another example of lack of communication. Clarification on this matter was being chased.

24/2144/d Goal posts – Cllr Matraives

Cllr Matraives reported that he had looked at the goal posts and felt they were securely embedded in the ground with no evidence of movement. He felt that there was no need to pay for re-painting them as they were not used.

24/2145 PLANNING:

24/2145/a Matters For Report

Nothing to report.

24/2145/b Decisions Notified:

Nothing to report

24/2145/c Applications for consideration

Application Number: 24/02638/HOU

Location: Higher Barn Higher Street Norton Sub Hamdon TA14 6SN

Proposal: Installation of new painted hardwood timber framed window to allow natural light into existing kitchen.

The Parish Council had no objections

24/2146 FINANCE:

24/2146/a Matters for report:

Nothing to report

24/2146/b Matters for resolution

Nothing to report

24/2146/c Invoices Payable – all paid via the Unity Trust Bank

Louise Brooks	Democratic services – Nov 2024 (plus National Gov pay rise – backdated to April 2024)	£	1279.37
HMRC	Employee NI & PAYE & Employer NI to pay – Nov 24	£	455.59
Louise Brooks	Home Office Allowance – Nov 2024 – Government set	£	26.00
Louise Brooks	Nov Parish Council Office supplies – Includes paper, ink and other office consumables, postage.	£	44.00

Proposed: Cllr. Reid

Seconded: Cllr. Gartrell

Agreed unanimously

24/2147 VILLAGE HALL:

Nothing to report

24/2148 RECREATION GROUND:

Nothing to report

24/2149 **CORRESPONDENCE:**

1. The clerk reported on a very kind offer from a resident in Norton regarding available space within a garage for the parish council to store some equipment. However, it was felt that it was not a suitable space due to the owner's other belongings also stored there.
2. The clerk reported on an email she had received from the PCC with regards to the parish council making a contribution towards churchyard mowing expenses. The clerk explained that The Local Government Act 1972 permits a parish council to contribute towards the expenses incurred by any person in providing or maintaining a cemetery and s.215 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits a parish council to maintain a CLOSED churchyard.
However, the current legislation with regards to Parish Councils contributing towards an OPEN churchyard is very different. It is a very grey area and one that Parish Councils are advised not to get involved with. The current status says it is illegal for Parish Councils to do so. A small minority of Parish Councils still break the legislation and contribute but run the risk of being taken to court for illegal practice. We are advised by our legal advisers to not get involved with open churchyards until the law is changed.
Cllr Matraives made a suggestion that the new fund-raising group in Norton (Norton Community Matters) were looking for different projects to support in the village. The clerk would inform the PCC and suggest they approach them. **Action: Clerk**
3. The Clerk reported that she had received an email from the Chair of the PCC with regards to some roof damage that they had spotted to The Old School House by the church, following the recent storm. The clerk informed the PCC that they would write to the owner of the property suing the only address they had for them and let them know. **Action: Clerk**

24/2150 **FOOTPATHS:**

The Chair reported that she had spoken to both the landowners of land on either side of the footpath that runs between Little Norton and Broadmead Lane to ask them to cut back the low hanging trees and branches.

24/2151 **MEMBERS' REPORTS.**

The Chair reported that she had received complaints regarding food waste being thrown into hedges etc. instead of using the brown bins that SC provide. The clerk was asked to include a piece in the newsletter.

Action: Clerk

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.20pm

The next monthly meeting will be held on MONDAY 13th JANUARY 2025 at 7.30 pm in the village hall committee room.