

**Minutes of the Meeting of Ilton Parish Council held in Merryfield Hall on  
Tuesday 11 February 2025 at 6.30pm.**

**Present:** Cllrs: J Bennett (Chair), J Easterbrook, A Gordon, N Matravers, A Pidgeon, L Pike, S Ripley, I Sherwood

**In attendance:** Mrs A Dallaway (Clerk/RFO), Cllr J Roundell Greene (Somerset Council) and four members of the public

**2025/16 Apologies and reasons for absence:** Cllr B Vance (personal reasons).

**2025/17 Declarations of Interest:** There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the meeting.

**2025/18 Items to be dealt with after the public, including the press have been excluded:** Agenda items 10 and 16/minute ref: 2025/25 and 2025/31 respectively) will be held in closed session as the Council will be discussing the terms of a contract.

**2025/19 Public Participation**

**Public:** A local resident wrote to Somerset Council Highways Department and Planning Department in November 2024, regarding a highways matter and there has still been no response from SC officers. The Clerk has also contacted SC regarding this matter. Cllr J Roundell Greene has been copied into recent communications and will continue to chase a response.

**Public:** An informal petition via Face Book has demonstrated considerable local interest in a dedicated, enclosed, off-lead exercise area for dogs. Local residents could help to monitor dog fouling in the enclosure and the initiative may help to minimise dog fouling in the rest of the village. Is this something the Parish Council would consider at the Rec Field?

**Public:** The Parish Council will need to consider the following: costs of fencing the area; dog barking; dog fouling; dog owners from neighbouring villages travelling to Ilton to use the facility.

*Council: This matter is an agenda item, item 15 b) ii). At the Chairman's discretion, the agenda item will be brought forward to be discussed after the Somerset Council Councillor Report.*

**2025/20 Somerset Council Councillor Report**

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene reported as follows:

- Council Tax - SC is proposing a 7.5% rise in Council Tax for 2025/26 although this will not raise enough money to meet the funding shortfall. SC budget meeting is scheduled for 5 March.
- Flooding – Somerset saw significant flood disruption in recent weeks but no specific incidents were reported from Ilton.
- Solar Farm – Cllr Roundell Greene is planning a site visit to review progress.

Council highlighted the pot holes on the road out of the village to Isle Abbots. Cllr Roundell Greene will refer this matter to Highways.

**AGENDA ITEM BROUGHT FORWARD**

**2025/30 b ii) Rec Field development**

**ii) Dedicated, off-lead, enclosed dog exercise area at Rec Field – to consider providing this facility and the need for village consultation**

Council raised a number of potential issues including dog fouling, dog owners not exercising adequate control, the cost of the fencing and the fact that the Rec Field is not well drained and the area could become very muddy. Contractors may also be reluctant to strim and mow in a dog exercise area. Council considered Brook Green as an alternative location but this is Common Land. The owner of the

new Solar Farm in the village has offered to provide an enclosed 4-metre strip of land around the solar panel installation where dogs can be let off the lead.

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO TRIAL THE OFFER OF AN ENCLOSED, OFF-LEAD DOG EXERCISE AREA AT THE SOLAR FARM**

**PROPOSED BY AP; SECONDED BY IS. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. 7 VOTES FOR; 1 AGAINST**

*Three members of the public left the meeting*

**2025/21 Ilminster Football Club – representatives in attendance to discuss Ilton football pitch hire arrangement**

Due to a very full meeting agenda, this item has been deferred to the March meeting.

**2025/22 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 14 January 2025: to approve the minutes as a true record & consider any matters arising**

Minute ref 2025/8: Council noted that it would not be practical to have the December 2025 Parish Council meeting on the fourth Tuesday of the month as this would be too close to Christmas. The December meeting will be held on the second or third Tuesday of December, depending on the availability of the hall. The Clerk will produce a schedule of meeting dates for 2025/26 for approval at the March meeting.

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AN ACCURATE RECORD**

**PROPOSED BY IS; SECONDED BY LP. ALL IN FAVOUR.**

**2025/23 Planning Applications – to receive any planning applications since the last meeting**

- a) **24/02025/FUL at Ilton Business Park, Unit 7B, Main Street, Ilton - the erection of a single storey extension**

**COUNCIL RESOLVED NO OBJECTIONS TO THIS APPLICATION**

**PROPOSED BY SR; SECONDED BY NM. ALL IN FAVOUR.**

**2025/24 Accounts and Financial Information 24/25 (documents previously circulated)**

- a) **Bank reconciliation to 31/01/2025 – to receive and sign**

Cllr J Bennett signed the bank reconciliation to 31/01/2025

- b) **Summary Receipts & Payments report to 31/01/2025 – received**

- c) **Schedule of Payments for February 2025 – to consider for approval (see Appendix to the mins)**

Council noted one additional payment to N Mackenzie Green for annual litter picking in the village £632.99

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE PAYMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 2025**

**PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY AP. ALL IN FAVOUR**

The Clerk will schedule the bank payments online and Cllr Bennett will authorise as the second signatory in line with the Council's bank mandate.

- d) **Asset Register 2024/25 – to review draft and consider for approval**

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE ASSET REGISTER 2024/25**

**PROPOSED BY AP; SECONDED BY JE. ALL IN FAVOUR**

- e) **Internal Auditor – to consider appointment for 2024/25**

Council considered the four quotes obtained and agreed to appoint Paul Russell from Parish & Town Auditing Services as the Internal Auditor for 2024/25 at a cost of £225. The audit will be held face to face with no additional charge for travel costs.

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPOINT PAUL RUSSELL FROM PARISH & TOWN AUDITING SERVICES AS THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2024/25.**

**PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY NM. ALL IN FAVOUR**

**2025/25 Hedge cutting contract 2025/26 – to receive and consider quotes**

*At the Chairman's discretion this item was deferred to the end of the meeting to be held in closed session.*

**2025/26 Cemetery**

Initial .....

**a) Cemetery procedures – to receive an update following the ICCM training and to note the updated rates on the Council website**

The recent ICCM training has highlighted that the Council's Cemetery administration procedures and record keeping require improvement. The Cemetery map also needs updating. The Clerk and Cllr Bennett have begun the process of reviewing and collating all of the burial data. The annual check of all the memorials in the Cemetery has also been carried out in line with the Cemetery Risk Assessment. Council noted that the schedule of Cemetery fees on the website has now been updated to reflect the fee increases approved in November 2021. The Clerk will be reviewing Cemetery forms and updated forms will shortly be available on the website.

**b) Scribe Cemetery software – to consider purchase to ensure security of data, digital mapping and improved record keeping £531 for first year and then £312 annually**

The Scribe software provides a database of burials and memorials and a digital map and can be used to produce notices, reports and also links to the invoicing facility. The software can also be used for the Churchyard. The software will significantly improve Cemetery administration procedures, ensure the security of burial data and improve the efficiency of historic data retrieval.

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF THE SCRIBE CEMETERY SOFTWARE PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY SR. ALL IN FAVOUR**

The set up and first year fee of £531 will be funded out of the Facilities & Amenities EMR. On-going costs can be funded out of the Cemetery budget allocation. Once the software has been installed, all of the burial data will need to be inputted and the digital map produced. This work can be shared between the Clerk and councillors by agreement.

**2025/27 Environment Matters**

**a) Merryfield Lane bench site – to receive an update and consider use of volunteers for bench repairs and removal of slabs**

Quotes are still pending for removing the planter and the slabs. Volunteers will commence the bench repairs. Costs for the bench repairs estimated to be less than £500.

**ACTION: CLLR GORDON**

**b) Spray pavements – to receive an update regarding Kier costs and consider works for approval**

Kier has provided a quote of £3205 for spraying all of the pavements in the village (three day's work). The Clerk will seek a comparison quote.

**ACTION: CLERK**

**c) Rec ditch clearance – to agree specification of works for this financial year**

Trust Green, the Management Company for Hawthorne Gardens has advised that foliage and tree debris will be cleared from the pond in the summer. Council agreed to commission a drainage survey at the Rec Field before committing any funds to drainage works. The £2.3K allocated for Rec Field drainage in this year's budget will be carried over to 2025/26 as part of the Rec Field Development EMR. The Clerk will obtain quotes for the drainage survey.

**ACTION: CLERK**

**d) Copse Lane car park gate post – to approve replacement post and consider use of volunteers to carry out work**

Council agreed to replace the gate post with a sleeper. Cllr Pidgeon will research materials and coordinate volunteers to carry out this work. A Risk Assessment will be produced in advance of the work. Costs estimated less than £100.

**ACTION: CLLR PIDGEON**

**e) Hawthorne Gardens entrance gate to Rec Field – to consider options for gateway**

Council agreed to take the *Dogs on lead* and *Clear up after your dog* signs off the little gate (which is currently staked open) and put them on the larger gate where they will be more visible.

**ACTION: CLLR PIDGEON**

**f) Footpath network – to note condition report to be presented to future Full Council meeting**

Cllr Ripley will prepare a condition report for the footpath network for the April meeting.

**ACTION: CLLR RIPLEY**

Initial .....

**g) Volunteer works – to agree volunteer works for February**

There will be volunteer working parties in the Churchyard and the Cemetery and some vegetation clearance on village pavements. A large, fallen tree branch also needs removing from the playpark.

**2025/28 Health & Safety matters**

**a) Grass cutting Risk Assessment and Method Statement (generic) – to approve the addition of the roller and the trailer**

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO INCLUDE THE USE OF THE ROLLER AND THE TRAILER IN THE GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT AND METHOD STATEMENT.**

**PROPOSED BY JE; SECONDED BY IS. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR WITH ONE VOTE ABSTAINING**

Cllr Matravers will risk assess the use of the equipment and the documents will be updated accordingly and circulated to all councillors for information.

**ACTION: CLLR MATRAVERS**

**b) Health & Safety responsibilities when using contractors – to review current practice**

Cllr Pidgeon highlighted the Council's responsibilities when using contractors and the need to be compliant with Health & Safety law. Council acknowledged the importance of considering the health and safety implications of any task to be contracted out and the importance of taking steps to mitigate any current or future risks. Cllr Pidgeon agreed to be the lead councillor on this matter. The Council will produce Risk Assessments as appropriate for tasks to be contracted out and the Risk Assessments will be shared with contractors as appropriate. All Risk Assessments received from contractors will be circulated to all councillors for information. The Clerk will ensure Cllr Pidgeon has received copies of all Risk Assessments and Method Statements received from contractors for active contracts.

**c) Chapter 8 road signs – to consider purchase**

Cllr Matravers and Cllr Gordon will check the current stock of signs and liaise with the Clerk to place an order for more signage as appropriate.

**ACTION: CLLR MATRAVERS/GORDON**

**d) Key holders – to receive report**

A register of key holders has been produced and circulated to all councillors. Two additional combination locks are to be purchased from Ilminster Hardware.

**ACTION: CLLR MATRAVERS**

The Clerk will contact Trust Green to inform them that the large gate into Hawthorne Gardens has been padlocked to prohibit unauthorised access.

**ACTION: CLERK**

*1 member of the public left the meeting*

**2025/29 Recreational facilities**

**a) Tree planting at Rec Field – to receive an update and consider proposals**

This item was deferred to the March meeting.

**b) MUGA electrical supply – to receive an update and consider quotes**

The safety inspection of the electrical installation has been carried out and the certificate received. Council will review matters highlighted for action and discuss at the March meeting. Quotes are still pending for the outstanding electrical works at the MUGA. Cllr Vance will continue to chase up outstanding quotes for review at the March meeting.

**ACTION: CLLR VANCE**

**c) Rec Field light – to consider quotes for the light at the entrance to the field**

This item was deferred to the March meeting, pending quotes.

**d) Football pitch Hire – to consider any changes to hire arrangements**

This item was deferred to the March meeting.

**e) Bike track at Copse Lane play park – to receive an update**

Initial .....

Quotes are still pending for works to flatten the earth mounds at the play park, remove the excess earth and rake in grass seed.

## **2025/30 Projects for 24/25**

### **a) Village signs – to receive an update**

SC has carried out a Safety Audit of the proposals for the standing stones and made recommendations regarding the locations. Once the location maps are finalised, the Council will contact SC Planning Team for advice.

**ACTION: CLLR EASTERBROOK**

### **b) Rec Field development**

#### **i) Bike track at Rec Field – to receive an update regarding consultation with the village children**

Two consultation sessions were organised with only 12 children attending in total. The children expressed a preference for one of the design proposals but also requested surfacing which is also suitable for scooters. Council expressed disappointment that so few children engaged with the consultation despite it being widely advertised within the village. The bike track installation is a very costly project and councillors expressed reluctance to commit funding to a project without demonstrable community support. An alternative proposal was to concentrate resources (Rec Field Development EMR) on infrastructure, for example drainage, parking facilities and lighting. Council noted that a future bike track installation would require both demonstrable community support and potentially local fundraising.

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO DEFER THE BIKE TRACK PROJECT AND CONCENTRATE RESOURCES ON GENERAL REC FIELD DEVELOPMENT**

**PROPOSED BY JE; SECONDED BY AG. MAJORITY VOTE IN FAVOUR. 6 VOTES IN FAVOUR, 2 VOTES AGAINST.** Cllr Pidgeon and Cllr Sherwood voted against as they were in favour of the bike track installation

#### **ii) Dedicated, off-lead, enclosed dog exercise area at Rec Field – to consider providing this facility and the need for village consultation SEE ABOVE/ITEM BROUGHT FORWARD AFTER SOMERSET COUNCIL REPORT**

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR AGENDA ITEMS 10 AND 16/MINUTE REF: 2025/25 AND 2025/31 RESPECTIVELY AS THE ITEMS RELATE TO CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

**PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY AG. ALL IN FAVOUR**

#### **2025/25 Hedge cutting contract – to consider quotes for 25/26 DEFERRED FROM ABOVE**

This matter was deferred to a future meeting, pending confirmation of the grass cutting contract for 2025/26.

#### **2025/31 Grass cutting contract – to receive an update regarding contract negotiations for 25/26**

Contract negotiations are on-going. Council reviewed the latest proposed amendments and approved a letter to be sent to the contractor.

**COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE LATEST PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO BE SENT IN A LETTER TO THE CONTRACTOR**

**PROPOSED BY SR; SECONDED BY AG. ALL IN FAVOUR**

**Date of next meeting:**

**Parish Council Meeting: Tuesday 11 March 2025 at 6.30pm at Merryfield Hall**

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed .....

Date .....

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