

**Minutes of the Meeting of Ilton Parish Council held in Merryfield Hall on
Tuesday 10 December 2024 at 6.30pm.**

Present: Cllrs: J Bennett (Chair), J Easterbrook, 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

2024/211 Apologies and reasons for absence: A Gordon (prior commitment), N Matravers (prior commitment) and B Vance (personal reasons).

2024/212 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the meeting.

2024/213 Items to be dealt with after the public, including the press have been excluded: Agenda item 12/minute ref: 2024/222: will be held in closed session as the Council will be discussing the terms of a contract.

2024/214 Public Participation

Public: A local resident has written to Somerset Council Highways Department and Planning Department to request a speed hump where St Katherine's Close joins St Peter's Close. The original Highways report suggested that traffic calming measures would only be necessary if the stretch of road was longer than 70 metres. There has been no response as yet from SC officers.

Council: The Clerk has also contacted the Highways Department for feedback and clarification of the requirement for traffic calming measures in this location.

Public: Will the Parish Council continue to allocate funding to pay someone to carry out litter picking in the village? Volunteers could carry out this role.

Council: This matter will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process.

Public: The Ilton Parish News Facebook page is managed by the Parish Council but does not seem to be very well used. This is a missed opportunity.

Council: The Clerk reported that there were some technical issues regarding access to the Facebook page but that the focus of content was currently Parish Council agendas and statutory notices.

2024/215 Somerset Council Councillor Report

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene reported as follows:

- Consultation on Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26 – there is a new proposal for payments to be backdated for three months.
- Council Tax 2025/26 - the Leader of the Council has written to the Minister for Local Government to explore the option of raising Council Tax to help meet the shortfall in funding for 2025/26.
- Household Support Fund – this fund is available to provide short-term, urgent financial help to Somerset residents who cannot afford household essentials.
- LCN Highways Working Group - Cllr Roundell Greene will be attending the forthcoming LCN Highways Working Group meeting in order to highlight the need for clear written, guidelines for Parish Councils planning to undertake maintenance works on SC land or assets. It is likely that further SC services will be devolved to Parish Councils in the coming years and clarity is needed regarding the use of external contractors, the requirement for Chapter 8 training and the insurance implications when Parish Councils are carrying out work on SC land or assets.

2024/216 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 12 November 2024: to approve the minutes as a true record & consider any matters arising

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AN ACCURATE RECORD

Initial

PROPOSED BY SR; SECONDED BY JE. ALL VOTING IN FAVOUR. Cllr Pidgeon did not take part in the vote as he was not present at the meeting.

2024/217 Planning Applications – to receive any planning applications since the last meeting
Council noted that no planning applications had been received since the last meeting.

2024/218 Committee Membership – to approve Andrew Pidgeon as a member of the Finance Committee

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE ANDREW PIDGEON AS A MEMBER OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

PROPOSED BY JE; SECONDED BY IS. ALL IN FAVOUR

2024/219 Accounts and Financial Information 24/25 (documents previously circulated)

a) Bank reconciliation to 30/11/2024 – to receive and sign

Cllr J Bennett signed the bank reconciliation to 30/11/2024

b) Summary Receipts & Payments report to 30/11/2024 – received

c) Schedule of Payments for December 2024 – to consider for approval (see Appendix to the mins)

Council noted additional payments for SALC for Councillor training £25 and for Bradfords Building Supplies for maintenance resources £45.05.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE PAYMENTS FOR DECEMBER

PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY SR. 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) Lloyd's bank – to note changes to accounts and introduction of bank charges in 2025

A letter has been received from Lloyd's bank advising that the bank will start charging an Account Maintenance Fee of £4.25 per month for each of the Council's current accounts from January 2025. The Council currently has two current accounts, one for day-to-day banking and one dedicated solely to CIL funds. Council agreed to close the CIL account and transfer the money to the Business Instant deposit account. The CIL fund will continue to be managed as an earmarked reserve.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO CLOSE THE CIL ACCOUNT AND TRANSFER THE FUNDS TO THE BUSINESS INSTANT ACCOUNT

PROPOSED BY IS; SECONDED BY JB. ALL IN FAVOUR

e) Finance Committee – to receive the draft minutes of the Fin Com meeting 3 December 2024 and consider recommendations:

i) Clear drains and gullies - book Kier for one day (SC Devolved Highways Steward fund)

Kier has provided a quote for this specialist service, £1400 per day including equipment and operatives. The Council has a list of drains/gullies which need to be prioritised. If possible, a councillor will accompany Kier operatives as they carry out the work.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE UP TO £1500 FOR KIER TO CARRY OUT A DAY OF DRAIN/GULLY CLEARANCE.

PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY JE. ALL IN FAVOUR

ii) Spray pavements - book Kier for one day (SC Devolved Verges fund)

Kier has provided a quote for this work, £684 per day including operatives plus £100 for materials based on general vegetation clearance. The Clerk will obtain a separate quote for spraying which would need to take place in the spring. This item will be deferred to the January meeting in order to clarify the maintenance required and when this should take place.

iii) Cemetery fees - no increases to the cemetery fees for 25/26

COUNCIL RESOLVED NO INCREASES TO THE CEMETERY FEES FOR 25/26

PROPOSED BY IS; SECONDED BY AP. ALL IN FAVOUR

Initial

**iv) MUGA hire fees - no increase to the MUGA hire fees for 25/26
COUNCIL RESOLVED NO INCREASE TO THE MUGA HIRE FEES FOR 25/26
PROPOSED BY AP; SECONDED BY SR. ALL IN FAVOUR**

**v) Football pitch hire fees - no increase to the Football pitch hire fees for 25/26
COUNCIL RESOLVED NO INCREASE TO THE FOOTBALL PITCH HIRE FEES FOR 25/26
PROPOSED BY AP; SECONDED BY JE. MAJORITY VOTE IN FAVOUR - 5 VOTES FOR WITH
ONE VOTE ABSTAINING**

Council noted that any shortfall in funding to cover the costs of providing the football pitch to junior league standard, would be covered by the Rec Field Development EMR.

2024/220 Budget 2025/26 – to review the draft budget for 2025/26 including precept request (final approval at January Full Council)

The Finance Committee had considered the first draft of the budget for 2025/26 (produced by the Clerk/RFO) and had made a number of amendments to the budget allocations. The revised draft of the budget was presented to Full Council for review. The Clerk reported that the revised draft budget was balanced with a precept figure of £55,000, consistent with last year. The Clerk highlighted the following:

- Increased allocation for **salary costs** in 2025/26 – the hourly rate and hours per week have been increased. The 2025/26 costs also reflect the increased ENI cost at 15% and the lowered earnings threshold for National Insurance.
- Increased allocation for **play park maintenance** for 2025/26 – a lot of the equipment is reaching the age where it will need repair or renewal.
- Increased allocation for **green space maintenance** for 2025/26 – to allow for machinery service costs and hedge cutting in the Council owned amenity areas.
- New budget code for **Rec Field Facilities** for 2025/26 – to include the cost of the hire of the porta-loos to enable the use of the football pitch for junior league matches.
- The 2024/25 budget codes for **SC devolved services** will be carried over with year-end balances to 2025/26 and will in future be managed as earmarked reserves.
- Small increase in allocation for **litter picking** for 2025/26 – to include annual payment for litter picking services and an allocation for resources to encourage volunteers to help out. Council noted that two bags of litter were being collected each week.

The revised draft budget will be presented to Full Council in January for formal approval including the precept request for 2025/26. The draft budget will be made available on the website in advance of the Full Council meeting in January.

2024/221 Environment Matters

a) Repairs to bench in Merryfield Lane – to review the revised specification of works

This item was deferred to January Full Council.

b) Tree survey at churchyard – to consider quotes

Three quotes were obtained with one within the scope of the £350 approved by Council in October 2024. The tree survey has been scheduled for 6 January.

c) Volunteer works – to agree volunteer works for December

There will be volunteer working parties in the churchyard and the playpark.

At the Chairman's discretion, the next agenda item was deferred to the end of the meeting.

2024/222 Grass cutting contract – to receive an update from the working group and consider updated contract specification for 25/26

2024/223 Hedge cutting contract – to approve specification for 25/26

Council reviewed the draft specifications for works using hand held equipment and works using a tractor and flail and made the following amendments:

- Bus shelter – only one cut per year necessary (hand held)
- Cemetery – the outside perimeter hedge (adjacent to Cemetery entrance) to be cut as far as the gate into the field (hand held)

Initial

- Rec Field and Copse Lane car park – only one cut per year necessary (tractor)
- Contractor to advise re optimum months for work to be carried out

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE SPECIFICATION FOR HEDGE WORKS FOR 2025/26 SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE AMENDMENTS

PROPOSED BY IS; SECONDED BY JB. ALL IN FAVOUR

Three quotes will be obtained for consideration at January Full Council.

Council noted that hedge cutting at the Rec Field and Copse Lane car park is still outstanding for this year. The appointed contractor is no longer able to carry out the work but the work will be scheduled this year, weather and ground conditions permitting.

2024/224 Recreational facilities

a) Rec Field working group – to receive an update

Following advice from the local ecologist, Council requested that the Clerk write to Allison Homes Management Company to request clarification of the pond maintenance programme as it is impacting on the drainage in the Rec Field.

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

Site visits have taken place with the SC Tree Strategist and a local ecologist. The SC Tree Strategist has produced a comprehensive planting proposal and guidelines. Council suggested that only one copse should be established and four specimen trees at the Rec Field. Support was also expressed for the willow structure to be extended to create a shelter. Cllr Bennett will continue to liaise with the SC Tree Strategist and the local ecologist.

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

One quote has been obtained to date. Additional quotes will be obtained for review at January Full Council.

ACTION: CLLR B VANCE/CLERK

d) Rec Field light – to approve the specification for the light at the entrance to the field

A light is required at the entrance to the field to enable safe access. The contractor to advise regarding a suitable light for this public area, taking into consideration access to the existing power source. This matter will be an agenda item for January Full Council.

e) Locks at Rec Field – to consider the renewal of all locks

Council agreed to renew all the locks on the gates at the Rec Field as it was difficult to track who had historically been issued with keys. Locks will be renewed on the main entrance gate, the Hawthorn gate and on both containers. The Clerk will maintain a register of all keys issued. Cllr Pidgeon will endeavour to purchase the locks from Bradfords or Eagle Plant where the Parish Council has an account.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE RENEWAL OF ALL LOCKS AT THE REC FIELD

PROPOSED BY IS; SECONDED BY SR. ALL IN FAVOUR

Funded out of the Rec Field Development EMR.

ACTION: CLLR A PIDGEON

f) Football pitch draft Conditions of Hire – to consider for approval

Council considered the draft Conditions of Hire for the football pitch (based on the MUGA conditions of hire) and made the following amendments:

- 1.3 No stipulation regarding the hirer's level of PLI cover.
- 2.1 Pitch to be hired on an hourly basis and include the use of portable toilets.
- 2.3 Bookings to be made in writing.
- 2.4 No charge to be made if the hirer provides a minimum of 24 hours' notice of cancellation. This qualifies the resolution made at the November Full Council 2024/206 d ii) but the substantive resolution made in November remains.
- 2.6 Remove as IPC does not issue refunds or credits for sessions hired.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE DRAFT CONDITIONS OF HIRE FOR THE FOOTBALL PITCH SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE AMENDMENTS

PROPOSED BY SR; SECONDED BY AP. MAJORITY VOTE IN FAVOUR. 5 VOTES FOR AND 1 VOTE AGAINST

g) Father Christmas sleigh – to approve use of the Parish Council tractor

Council approved the use of the tractor and trailer and this event will be covered by the Council's insurance. The Clerk will produce a Risk Assessment for the event.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE USE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL TRACTOR FOR THE FATHER CHRISTMAS SLEIGH

PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY SR. ALL IN FAVOUR

2024/225 Projects for 24/25

a) Village signs – to receive an update

The Council is still awaiting feedback from SC Area Highways Team regarding the proposals.

b) Bike track at Rec Field – to review revised design proposal and confirm arrangements for consultation with the village children

The Council now has two design proposals and would like to organise some consultation with the village children. A consultation session will be organised one evening at the Village Hall after the Youth Club. There will also be a leaflet drop to every household with children in the village the week before the consultation session. Notices will be displayed at the school, on village noticeboards and on the Council's website and Face Book pages.

ACTION: CLLR J BENNETT

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR AGENDA ITEM 12/MINUTE REF: 2024/222 (DEFERRED TO THE END OF THE MEETING) AS THE ITEM RELATES TO CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

PROPOSED BY JB; SECONDED BY AP. ALL IN FAVOUR

Members of the public left the meeting.

2024/222 Grass cutting contract – to receive an update from the working group and consider updated contract specification for 25/26

The working group met in December and reviewed the existing grass cutting contract and made recommendations regarding the general terms and specification of works for 2025/26. Council reviewed the revised contract terms and approved the draft to be sent to the contractor for consideration. The revised contract includes a more detailed specification of works for each amenity area in order to clarify maintenance requirements. The revised contract for 25/26 also includes the terms of the Addendum approved in 2024. The Council hopes to meet with the contractor in the New Year for further negotiation of the contract terms.

COUNCIL RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE REVISED DRAFT GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT FOR 2025/26 TO BE SENT TO THE CONTRACTOR FOR CONSIDERATION

PROPOSED BY AP; SECONDED BY IS. ALL IN FAVOUR

The Clerk will also contact the contractor to request that the outstanding tree pruning be carried out in the play park and the church yard.

Date of next meeting:

Parish Council Meeting: Tuesday 14 January 2025 at 6.30pm at Merryfield Hall

The meeting closed at 9pm

Signed

Date

Initial