

Clerk to the Council

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PORLOCK



Parish Council

Parish Room

Old School Centre

West End

PORLOCK

Somerset TA24 8NP

Signed:

Date:

Minutes of the Porlock Parish Council Meeting
Porlock Village Hall, Wednesday 13 September 2023, 7pm
Copies of minutes and non-confidential reports are available on request

Councillors Present:

Cllr S Colson, Cllr D McCanlis (Chair), Cllr S McCanlis, Cllr D Thornton, Cllr L Thornton

Also present: Annie Dallaway (Parish Clerk/RFO), 6 members of the public for part of the meeting, Cllr Steven Pugsley & Cllr Frances Nicholson (Somerset Council, in attendance for part of the meeting)

GUEST SPEAKER: Thomas Thurlow, Historic Buildings Officer, Exmoor National Park Authority gave a talk on the Management Plans for Porlock and Porlock Weir Conservation Areas.

The Conservation Area Appraisals were recently renewed (available on the ENPA website) and Management Plans are currently being produced to identify the main issues regarding the built environment that Porlock and Porlock Weir face, and what solutions might be available. It is recommended in the Appraisals that Article 4 directions are introduced. Article 4 Directions are used to remove certain permitted development rights to help ensure characteristic features of buildings, streets, and settlements are maintained. As part of the Management Plan process, the Parish Council and local residents will be consulted and encouraged to feedback on issues and how they can be addressed. The next step is for Thomas Thurlow to send a list of recommendations and concerns to the Parish Council for feedback and to discuss how best to facilitate community engagement with the process. A drop-in session or public meeting can be arranged and it is expected that the consultation stage will be completed by Christmas.

The Chair thanked Thomas Thurlow for his presentation.

1) Apologies for absence were received by the Council

Cllr L Bloys will be arriving later.

2) Declarations of Interest and Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Dispositions

There were none declared.

3) To agree any items to be dealt with after the public, including the press, have been excluded.

Item 19 ii) and iii) will be held in closed session as the Council will be considering legal advice and publicity is likely to prejudice the legal position of the Council (note amendment to numbering on agenda)

4) Public Participation – there were 6 members of the public in attendance. Members of the public were reminded that the Public Participation session was restricted to 15 minutes with individuals having 3 minutes each.

PUBLIC: Nigel Lamacraft

Is there an update on the inspection of the War Memorial? Are there any costings? I raised this nearly 4 years ago and I thought the Parish Council had already applied for a grant. If Council present the report later in the meeting, I won't be able to ask questions outside of the public participation session.

PUBLIC: Deborah Stanyon

The War Memorial is a village asset of historic value and the public should have access to the report.

COUNCIL: The survey of the War Memorial has been carried out and a full report is now available. The Parish Council will be approaching the War Memorial Trust for a grant to cover maintenance costs. There will be an update in the Assets & Property Portfolio Report under agenda item 10. The War Memorial survey report will be publicly available on the Parish Council website tomorrow.

PUBLIC: Nigel Lamacraft

Would the Parish Council consider purchasing future benches out of reconstituted plastic?

COUNCIL: Yes, the Council will consider this.

5) To receive reports from Somerset Council

Somerset Council representatives were due to attend the meeting later in the evening. The Chair advised that this matter was deferred.

6) To approve the minutes for the Full Council Meeting held on 12 July 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve the Full Council Meeting Minutes of 12 July 2023.

The Clerk reported on a matter arising from agenda item 5 – a member of the public had queried the bench values in the asset register. The Clerk advised that the £5K for benches represents purchase price including installation. Council noted that the £5k includes costs for 8 benches but 2 have now been given to the Methodist Church so the asset value figure does need amending.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

7) To approve the minutes for the Extraordinary Meeting held on 7 August 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve the Extraordinary Meeting Minutes of 7 August 2023.

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

8) Parish Council vacancies – to receive an update

There are currently 6 vacancies. 5 vacancies are available for election and Somerset Council has scheduled the next by-election for 19 October 2023 with the deadline for nominations 22 September 2023. A further vacancy is available to be filled by co-option.

9) Code of Conduct – to note receipt of a Code of Conduct complaint

The Council received a Code of Conduct complaint in June 2023 via the Somerset Council Monitoring Officer, who has since investigated the complaint and confirmed to all concerned that the complaint has not been upheld. This is one of at least 5 that have been received from the same person or on behalf of the same person, from the same organisation in the past 3 years, all of which have not been upheld.

10) Assets & Property Portfolio – report previously circulated

i. Skip for Old School Centre

Council **RESOLVED** to approve a 4 cubic yard skip for 10 days to be sited in the OSC car park – exact location and date to be agreed. The skip is needed for waste materials arising from various village sites. Approximate cost £259.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

ii. Village Hall car park – report previously circulated

a) To confirm arrangements for reserved parking. The Clerk is still trying to clarify this matter with Savills, the agent for Porlock Manor Estate. This item will be deferred to the October meeting.

b) To confirm areas of responsibility regarding grounds. Council agreed that the Parish Council is responsible for the car park including the area cordoned off for Village Hall use and the Village Hall is responsible for the paved areas around the hall and the steps.

7.35pm Cllr L Bloys arrived at the meeting

7.40pm Cllr F Nicholson, Somerset Council arrived at the meeting

iii. Cemetery Regulations – to review and approve draft previously circulated

The revised draft regulations relate to Hawkcombe Cemetery and the closed churchyard at St Dubricius. Council reviewed and agreed the following:

4.4 The definition of a resident - “A resident of Porlock is defined as somebody who a) was a resident of the parish immediately prior to their death or b) lived in the parish for over ten years and moved out of the parish less than 5 years before their death or moved out to be cared for”.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Bloys; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

5.1 Consecration of the site – the Clerk will clarify whether the whole or part of the Cemetery has been consecrated by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese as this has implications for the administration.

5.3 Public graves - to be allowed at the Cemetery for those that can't afford to pay for a plot or have a memorial.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

5.7 / 10.3

Fresh flowers and artificial flowers (not plastic) - to be allowed on lawn graves and cremated remains graves.

Personal items – to be allowed on lawn graves and cremated remains graves in line with 10.3.

Kerbs, fences or surrounds - the Cemetery does include historic kerb sets but there have been no new kerb sets in recent decades and the existing regulations prohibit them for maintenance reasons as it is difficult to mow around them. Council agreed that there should be no new kerbs, fences or surrounds but that an existing single kerb set could be extended to a double kerb set, if the plot holder owns the adjacent plot.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

Council RESOLVED to approve the revised draft regulations and noted that the consecration of the site was still to be clarified. The new regulations will be available on the website.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

8pm Cllr F Nicholson, Somerset Council stepped out of the meeting

iv. Noticeboards/signage – to review quotes and approve funding for new noticeboards for OSC, St Dubricius Church & Methodist Church

Council agreed to defer this item to October pending further discussion with the church.

v. Parish Office security – to receive an update

The Clerk and Cllr L Thornton have undertaken a thorough review of archive records and discovered missing minutes from March 1997 to December 2008. The Clerk wished to thank previous Councillor, Marilyn Russel for providing copies of minutes from March 1997 to December 2004. However, the Council is still trying to locate minutes from January 2005 to December 2008. Provision has been made in the Parish Office for the safe storage of confidential records so it will not be necessary to purchase a security shutter.

8.15pm Cllr S Pugsley, Somerset Council arrived at the meeting

8.30pm Cllr F Nicholson, Somerset Council returned to the meeting

11) Environment & Community Portfolio – report previously circulated

i. Traffic Calming working group – to receive report previously circulated (date of report Sept 23)

The public consultation questionnaire is now complete and the consultation should be carried out during September. Council expressed concern that several members of the working group had suffered verbal abuse from members of the public regarding highways matters.

ii. Double yellow lines – to note recommendations to Somerset Council Highways

Meadows – a local resident has expressed concern about obstructive parking in the road. A proposal to extend the existing double yellow lines has been forwarded to Somerset Council Highways department for inclusion in the next Traffic Order.

Doverhay – a local resident has expressed concern about obstructive parking in the road. A proposal to extend the existing double yellow lines has not been supported by a neighbouring resident. The Clerk will feedback to Somerset Council Highways department.

iii. No-loading yellow markers – to review impact on High Street

Somerset Council Highways department has repainted the single yellow kerb ticks on Porlock High Street between the Post Office and St Dubricius church, which reinstates a loading/unloading restriction between 10am and 4pm (the ticks had previously faded away and were barely visible). The Parish Council was not given any prior warning that this was happening and is concerned about the impact on deliveries to the shops and also that blue badge holders can no longer park for a limited period on the double yellow lines during the times of the loading restriction. The Parish Council agreed to write to Somerset Council to request that the yellow kerb ticks are removed. It was noted that an amendment to the Traffic Order would be required to amend the loading/unloading restriction and that this is a lengthy process. The Parish Council will suggest that the yellow ticks are blacked out pending the outcome of the proposal to amend the Traffic Order.

Council RESOLVED to petition Somerset Council to remove the yellow kerb ticks.

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR

iv. Late-Night Shopping – to receive an update

The Working Group has met and plans are underway.

v. Bench at the marsh near the memorial – to consider purchase and installation

Cllr L Bloys suggested a few extra wooden log seats on the path near the memorial. The Council expressed support for this proposal in principle but noted that any installation would require consent from Porlock Manor Estate and compliance with the conditions of the SSSI designation. The Clerk will liaise with the landowner and Cllr L Thornton and Cllr L Bloys will draw up a costed proposal for the October meeting.

vi. Replacement bench and memorial plaque at Hawkcombe playground – to consider purchase and installation

The existing bench at Hawkcombe playground is very dilapidated and needs to be replaced. A local resident has offered to make a donation to cover the costs of a replacement wooden bench to include a memorial plaque. The Council expressed support for this proposal. The Clerk will organise purchase and installation.

Council RESOLVED to support the installation of a replacement bench at Hawkcombe playground.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

vii. Somerset Council Public Space Protection order consultation (deadline 6 October) – to agree consultation response

Somerset Council is currently consulting on the dog fouling and dog control provisions in the ex-West Somerset area which expired in 2019. Council noted that the maps for the consultation were not easily accessible so it was difficult to undertake a thorough review of the PSPO.

In view of this, the Council RESOLVED to support the reinstatement of the provisions that previously existed.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

The Clerk will submit the consultation response on-line.

viii. Queen's Platinum Jubilee – to agree location of plaque

A ceramic plaque has been made by Charlotte and Malcolm Thorman. This will be erected under the canopy outside the Old School Centre to protect it from the weather.

ix. Emergency Plan – to consider the development of a plan for the parish

Council supported the idea of a planned response to emergencies such as major power outages, fire, flooding etc. Somerset Prepared is a multi-agency partnership which aims to support communities with emergency planning and resilience.

At the discretion of the Chair, local resident Alistair Campbell spoke on behalf of the local Flood Group and advised that the existing Flood Plan for the village is 4 years' old and needs updating. The Flood Group has a list of equipment and resources which should be added to the Council's asset register.

Council RESOLVED to begin drafting an Emergency Plan in liaison with Somerset Prepared and the existing Flood Group.

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

x. Ada Lovelace in Porlock group – to appoint a Council representative

The Council appointed Cllr D McCanlis to be the Council representative for this group which aims to raise awareness of the life and interests of Ada Lovelace and her links to Porlock.

5) Somerset Council reports (*deferred at the discretion of the Chair*)

Cllr Frances Nicholson reported that a new Highways operative would be taking over the **management of the salt bins and supplies**. It is important that the Highways Department liaises with parishes to ensure they have up to date location maps for salt bins and an understanding of precautionary routes. Council noted that the road to Porlock Weir should be included on the gritting schedule.

Cllr Steven Pugsley updated on matters raised at the last Parish Council meeting:

- Streetlights in West Porlock – repairs to take place within 7 days.
- Parking provision for Late Night shopping – negotiations are on-going.
- Parsons Street – 'Keep Clear' road markings to be refreshed.
- Central car park – trees trimmed and included on regular maintenance programme.
- Central car park grassy area – reports of anti-social behaviour and request for appropriate signage.

The Parish Council requested further information regarding this matter.

Somerset Councillors encouraged use of the on-line portal for reporting maintenance issues.

12) Finance – supporting documents previously circulated

i. To note the bank reconciliation to end July 2023. To approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end August 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end August 2023

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR.

ii. To receive the Detailed & Summary Receipts & Payments to end August 2023.

The Chair signed the Summary Receipts & Payments to end August 2023.

iii. To note the Schedule of Payments for August 2023 – noted.

iv. To approve and sign the final Schedule of Payments for September 2023
Council RESOLVED to approve and sign the final Schedule of Payments for September 2023
PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

v. Grant requests

a) Porlock Pantomime & Drama Society – purchase of stage equipment

This matter is deferred to the October meeting at the request of PPADS.

vi. Doverhay toilets – to note change to payment of electricity costs

Somerset Council make a contribution to the electricity costs at Doverhay car park (shared costs for toilets and car park lights). Historically, Somerset Council has been re-charged for the metered supply on a quarterly basis but from 2023/24, Somerset Council will be billed annually 50% of costs in arrears.

vii. Rural Market Towns Group – to consider annual subscription

Council agreed that they did not want to pay the annual subscription of £90.75 as they did not have time to devote to additional meetings.

viii. Investment options – to consider report and recommendations from RFO (report previously circulated)

The Internal Auditor has recommended that Council needs to review its bank balances and place some money into short term investments. The RFO recommends that the Council opens a Unity Instant Access account and transfers £100K. This is a low-risk option which will generate a better return on Council funds but will still allow instant access to operational funds if need be. Investment options can be reviewed annually.

Council RESOLVED to transfer £100k to a Unity Instant Access account.

PROPOSER: Cllr D Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR.

ix. Standing Order amendments

a) Draft meeting minutes to be published on the website (including committee) SO 12 e)

b) Include facility for use of paper ballot for voting during co-option process SO 3 s)

Council RESOLVED to approve the above amendments to the Standing Orders.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

x. Bank Mandate – to approve the addition of a signatory

Council RESOLVED to approve Cllr S Colson as a Unity bank signatory

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

13. Policy Review

i) Use of Old School Grounds policy – this item will be deferred to the October meeting.

ii) Safeguarding policy - required to support the Volunteer Agreement for the Library. This item will be deferred to the October meeting.

iii) Grounds Maintenance policy – previously circulated

Parts 1,2,3: Policy guidelines – approved subject to minor amendment of wording in Part 2, to allow for consideration of the visual impact of any works carried out.

Part 4: Areas to be maintained by Porlock Parish Council - still to be confirmed.

Part 5: Schedule of Maintenance - to be developed in consultation with the contractor, landowners and residents. Council noted that the Grounds Maintenance contract will be formally reviewed for 2024/25.

Council RESOLVED to approve the Grounds Maintenance policy, Parts 1, 2 & 3 as above.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr S McCanlis voted against as she does not support the use of herbicides.

iv) Retention policy – the Clerk recommended that the Council follows the guidelines published by the National Association of Local Councils. Cllr S Colson requested an opportunity to read the guidelines. This item will be deferred to the October meeting.

v) Privacy Notice – the Council noted minor administrative changes. The Privacy Notice is available on the website.

vi) Accessibility Statement for website – the current Accessibility Statement is available on the website. Cllr S Colson requested more time to review the Accessibility Statement. This item will be deferred to the October meeting.

14. Planning

- i. To receive the Planning Committee minutes from 31 August 2023 and note consultation response**
Council received the Planning Committee minutes from 31 August 2023 and noted the consultation response for 6/27/23/010 which was submitted to the ENPA Planning Authority. Cllr D Thornton expressed disappointment that the Council had requested advice from the Planning Authority and had not received a response.
- ii. To receive an update regarding enforcement matters**
ENPA has advised that they are satisfied that the units of accommodation at Porlock Caravan Holiday Park are being used in accordance with the condition of the holiday occupancy restrictions which prevents them being used for permanent residential use.
- iii. To receive an update regarding the Exmoor National Park Authority consultation on proposed changes to ENPA meeting process (deadline 29 September)**
The ENPA is proposing to change the way it runs its Authority meetings to improve efficiency and reduce costs in the light of the current budgetary situation. This includes reducing the number of meetings annually from ten to six and creating a smaller, separate Planning sub-committee. Council agreed that Cllr D Thornton would draft a response and circulate for approval by email and the Clerk would submit the final response.

15. Strategic planning – to receive an update

This item will be deferred to the October meeting.

16. Reports from outside bodies – to receive reports previously circulated

Council noted the following reports: Dovere Manor Museum, Local Community Network, Library and Village Hall. There were no questions raised. These reports will be available on the website.

17. Correspondence – to receive the Schedule of Correspondence

There was no Schedule of Correspondence received. This agenda item is under review.

18. Staffing – supporting documents previously circulated.

i) Admin Officer – to approve the appointment and contractual terms for the Admin Officer

A provisional offer of employment has been made to Caroline Harding. Council reviewed the draft employment contract for the Admin Officer and agreed to delete section 7.1 and that section 9.2 should be consistent with the provision in the Clerk's contract.

Council RESOLVED to approve the appointment and contractual terms for Caroline Harding as Admin Officer

PROPOSER: Cllr L Bloys; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

ii) Caretaker - to delegate authority for recruitment to the Staffing Committee and approve budget as necessary

The Old School Centre Caretaker has advised the Council that he would like to retire. The Council paid tribute to the long service of the Caretaker. The Staffing Committee will meet to review the Caretaker's job description and weekly hours and to implement short-term cover pending the recruitment of a replacement Caretaker.

Council RESOLVED to delegate authority for the recruitment process to the Staffing Committee. It was noted that changes to the remit of the role and contractual terms for the Caretaker will require approval from Full Council.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

19. Arrangements (including legal agreements) with other bodies – to receive an update

i) To approve £600 plus VAT towards PVCIC legal fees for the preparation of a new lease

Council RESOLVED to approve £600 plus VAT towards PVCIC legal fees for the preparation of a new lease

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

Council RESOLVED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR AGENDA ITEM 19 ii) & iii) as the Council will be considering legal advice and publicity is likely to prejudice the legal position of the Council

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

A confidential report will be filed with the minutes.

ii) PVCIC lease – to review first draft of the new lease for premises within the OSC

The Council's solicitor has provided the first draft of the new lease and highlighted matters which require clarification and decision. The Council reviewed the draft document and addressed some of the matters raised by the solicitor but further legal advice is necessary. The Clerk will liaise with the solicitor and the Chair will call an Extraordinary Meeting later this month, to enable the Council to approve the draft lease before it is sent to the PVCIC solicitor.

Cllr L Bloys left the meeting at 10pm.

iii) Lovelace Centre legal agreement – to receive an update

Council reviewed further advice from the solicitor.

The meeting closed at 22.10