

Lydeard St Lawrence and Tolland Parish Council Meeting

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Minutes of the Parish Council (PC) Meeting held in the Village Hall on 13th January 2025 at 7:30pm

Present: Cllrs Marshall – Chairman, Telling, Oxley, Vickery and Harding supported by Neal Gossage (Clerk).

Apologies: Cllrs Hobson and Peters

Absent: Cllr Sturgess

In attendance: Cllr M Rigby (Somerset Council) for Somerset Council update only.

No members of the public were present.

25.001 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to items on the agenda.

25.002 Minutes of meeting held on 2nd December 2024

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

25.003 Matters Arising

Cllr Marshall enquired as to whether the Clerk had heard from Santander in relation to the change in the bank mandate. The Clerk confirmed that he had not heard from Santander so the Chairman agreed to contact the bank again.

Action: Cllr Marshall

25.004 Somerset Council update

Cllr M Rigby updated the parish council on the following matters:

Budget 2025/26

It is likely that Somerset Council will set a budget but the reserves used last year and asset sales will not be widely available in 2025/26. The costs of care services continue to increase

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together with the complexity of the services provided. Somerset Council agreed to limit council tax increases to 2% for six years and that continued for six years until 2017. That has left Somerset Council having a lower council tax than its neighbours in other counties. Overall increases in council tax are now limited to 5% pa including the 2% social care levy.

It is accepted that further cuts in costs can be made but the scope for such cuts is now much more limited. The Council has embarked on a redundancy programme and many members of staff have now left the organisation.

The government has announced that a review of social care will start in 2028 but it is unlikely that there will be any benefit from that until 2030.

Planning

The planning department now has more resources (around 160 people for the whole of Somerset) and it is anticipated that planning applications will be progressed faster.

Cllr Harding enquired what would happen when projects had been undertaken without planning consent being obtained. Cllr Rigby responded in saying that people would be encouraged to make applications 'after the event' but that planning permission infringements would be acted on.

Broadband

New funding for broadband is being provided by the government through BDUK. It is not clear how much will be allocated to Somerset but it is hoped that Lydeard St Lawrence and Tolland may be able to benefit from this new funding. It was noted that Airband is rolling out new installations but funding for the company seems to have dried up. The focus is now on signing up new customers rather than increasing connectivity via new cables.

Other matters

Cllr Telling enquired as to whether Somerset Council will continue to provide salt bags. Salt bags will be provided for this winter but it is unlikely that funding will be available to provide salt bags for the 2025/26 winter.

Cllr Harding enquired what is happening to fix potholes more quickly. Cllr Marshall noted that large potholes are repaired fairly promptly and Cllr Rigby noted that Somerset expects to receive around £9m as part of the government's new initiative on potholes. Somerset Council will attempt to fix potholes within one week of them being reported.

Cllr Marshall noted that trees had come down due to storm Darragh and outlined the road damage that had resulted from fallen trees. Cllr Marshall agreed to provide Cllr Rigby with a map showing the location of the damage so that repairs can be made.

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Action: Cllr Marshall

It was noted that flooding had occurred around Pyleigh and Westleigh House Farm. Cllr Marshall agreed to send Cllr Rigby details of the location to see what action can be taken to deal with the problem.

Action: Cllr Marshall

Cllr Rigby left the meeting.

25.005 Planning Applications

Planning application 22/24/0007 was discussed. No objections were expressed to the application and it was agreed that no comments would be made on the matter.

25.006 Police and Crime Report

Cllr Marshall noted that no report had been received this month so he would write to PCSO Whelan again to establish why reports are not being made available to the parish council.

Action: Cllr Marshall

25.007 Budget 2025/26

A revised draft of the Budget was considered. The budget incorporated the changes discussed at the previous parish council meeting which were set out in a paper for this meeting. The Clerk outlined the changes that had been made. After further discussion it was agreed to accept the budget in line with the current draft.

Cllr Oxley proposed that the budget be accepted and that was seconded by Cllr Vickery. The motion received unanimous support.

The Clerk agreed to submit a precept demand to Somerset Council based on the budget.


Action: Clerk

25.008 New website

The Clerk reported that the new website was now live and asked councillors to submit any material they would like to the Clerk so that it could be put onto the website.

Councillors were pleased with the new site and expressed their thanks to the Clerk for setting up the new site.

Cllr Vickery proposed that the invoice from Parish Online (£260.00 + VAT) be paid. That was seconded by Cllr Harding and received unanimous support.

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The website has provision for photographs and short biographies for councillors. Councillors who wish to have their photographs on the website should submit photos to the Clerk for publication. Alternatively, photographs can be taken at the next parish council meeting.

25.009 Any Other Business

Planning Application

Immediately prior to the meeting, a planning application and listed building consent for works at Lower Tarr Farm had been received (Planning application 22/25/0001). In view of the deadline for responses being prior to the next parish council meeting, councillors agreed to discuss the matter. Councillors had no objection to the matter and agreed to make no comment.

Notice Board

It was noted that the notice board at Crosscroft had come down in the recent storm. Councillors questioned whether the notice board is needed and what the cost to repair the notice board might be. Cllr Marshall agreed to ascertain what the repair costs would be.

Action: Cllr Marshall

Play Park

Following a conversation with a member of the cricket club, Cllr Marshall reported that the play equipment – notably the slide and the rocking horse - had been found to be unsafe. Cllr Oxley agreed to establish the cost of repairing or replacing the equipment.

Action: Cllr Oxley

Cllr Telling noted that Tesco may be able to help to fund this through the 'blue disks' scheme and the Clerk agreed to contact Tesco to find out if such a project would be of interest.

Action: Clerk

The Clerk reminded councillors that play equipment should be checked for safety each week and a record should be kept of the inspections. This is in addition to the annual statutory inspections. Cllr Marshall agreed to raise this matter with the cricket club and report back.

Action: Cllr Marshall

Blocked footpath

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Cllr Harding noted that the footpath and bridleway between Tolland Road and Gaulden Manor and Watersmeet footpath had been partially blocked by fallen trees. Cllr Marshall agreed to write to the Rights of Way team at Somerset Council to find a resolution to the problem.

Action: Cllr Marshall

New website

There was some discussion as to what could be placed on the new website and whether a montage of the villages in the parish would make a good homepage image. It was agreed that councillors would come back with suggestions.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20:20.

The next meeting will be held in the Village Hall at 7:30pm on 3rd March 2025:

Marshall
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