

Burlescombe Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Asset and Responsibilities Working Group
on Monday, 5 August 2024 at Westleigh URC Hall

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Downing, Eaves, Farley, Palmer, Scott and Smith together with MDDC Councillors Lock and Westcott.

Councillor Forward opened the meeting at 7.40pm and welcomed all those present. The working group would conduct its business in accordance with the Terms of Reference for Asset and Responsibilities Working Group approved at the Parish Council meeting on 5 August 2024.

WG05082024/1 Apologies

None

WG05082024/2 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensation requests.

WG05082024/3 Introductions and identification of key skills within the Parish Council

Each Parish Councillor gave a short precis of their key skills and experience. Such skills and experience included:

- Administration
- Building and site management
- Chair of Governors
- Civil engineering
- Committee work
- Communications
- Equality
- Farming
- Fundraising
- General maintenance
- Logistics
- Parish Councillor responsibilities
- Research
- Security
- Teaching/schools/special needs
- Treasurer responsibilities

It was noted that the MDDC Councillors were able to provide experience on/as:

- Economics
- Parish Council work
- Planning
- Scrutiny

This information would be useful when assigning roles and responsibilities to parish councillor both within the Parish Council and for external bodies.

WG05082024/4 To review the documentation received from the outgoing Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and identify any missing documents

The outgoing Parish Clerk had provided several boxes of paperwork and the Parish Council computer to the temporary Parish Clerk and advised that much of the information had been on the website and on One Drive due to computer errors. Whilst printed copies of the minutes and agendas had been provided, electronic copies were not available.

The information received had been reviewed by the Chair and the temporary Parish Clerk and a significant amount of documentation was not available on the computer and/or in the boxes of paperwork provided. Most of the information on the computer was historical.

Investigation and reports generated had shown that most of the current documentation had been held on the website, the content of which was owned by/the Intellectual Property of Burlescombe Parish Council. This included access to the @burlescombe.org email addresses.

The temporary Parish Clerk advised that in a normal handover, the parish computer would allow the incoming clerk access to the modern day records of the Parish Council whilst historic documentation would be provided by paper copies. Such procedure allowed for a smooth handover and continuity.

The temporary Parish Clerk required access to the documentation on the website and the email address to operate and would seek to have the facilities provided under the contract reinstated as best practice would dictate.

Councillor Smith advised that she had received communication from the provider stating that it could be reinstated.

Action: temporary Parish Clerk

WG05082024/5 To make a recommendation to the Parish Council on the following:

For the Parish Council to operate the following key elements were discussed:

- Responsibilities of the Parish Council
- Any updates required to the asset register
- Allocation of councillor responsibilities
- Website and emails
- Parish Clerk/RFO job description and remuneration
- Any other Working Groups

Work on the responsibilities of the Parish Council and the asset register was ongoing and a further meeting would be held.

Allocation of councillor responsibilities covered both internal and external appointments and the following recommendations would go forward to the Parish Council for approval. Further appointments would be considered at the next meeting of the Working Group as the list of responsibilities and assets were completed.

Internal:

Planning - Councillor Eaves

MDDC sent all Consultation Requests and Decision Notices to the Parish Clerk who would confirm if Burlescombe Parish Council had registered to submit comments via the online portal.

Highways - Councillor Eaves

It was noted that the Neighbourhood Highways Officer had requested that all communication be made through the Parish Clerk. Reporting of highways issues could be done online via the DCC portal and going forward links to the portal on the website would be beneficial.

The Temporary Parish Clerk would confirm whether Burlescombe Parish Council were part of the Road Warden or Snow Warden scheme.

Footpaths - Councillor Smith

The Temporary Parish Clerk would confirm that Burlescombe Parish Council was part of the PROW scheme and received a grant for maintaining the footpaths.

Police Matters - Councillor Scott

The temporary Parish Clerk advised that there was a Councillor Advocate Scheme in place that provided for online and in person events to discuss police matters and recommended that whoever was given responsibility for police matters joined the Scheme on behalf of the Parish Council.

External:

Devon County Council

Communication was via the Parish Clerk who would generate information to all councillors. The DCC Ward Councillor was invited to and normally attended meetings and provided a report.

Mid Devon District Council

Communication was via the Parish Clerk who would generate information to all councillors. The MDDC Ward Councillors were invited to and normally attended meetings and provided a report.

School Liaison/Play Areas – Councillor Farley

St Mary's Church - Councillor Palmer

Website and emails

The temporary Parish Clerk advised that it was now best practice for all Parish Councils to operate a gov.uk website and associated email addresses. This could either be through an existing provider or through one of the specialist parish council website providers. Funding was currently available to obtain a gov.uk domain name.

The working group would make the recommendation to the next Parish Council meeting that the move to a gov.uk domain and associated email addresses be actioned.

Action: temporary Parish Clerk to obtain information for the next Parish Council meeting

Parish Clerk/RFO job description and remuneration

The temporary Parish Clerk had provided the Councillor Forward with a copy of the job description issued by Holcombe Rogus Parish Council. Councillor Forward advised that there was the possibility that an applicant for that position would also be interested in taking on the role at Burlescombe Parish Council and correspondence was ongoing.

The appointment of a Parish Clerk/RFO and the associated remuneration would be following an interview process and approval by the full Parish Council and may necessitate an advert being placed on the Devon Association of Local Councils website.

Any other Working Groups

Following discussion, the recommendation would be put forward that the following working groups be established with Terms of Reference:

Planning Committee – Councillors Evans, Forward and Palmer

It was noted that up to 95% of planning applications were approved if they met the National Planning Policy Framework 2024. Objections could only be raised on material planning considerations. Planning Committee meetings were open to the public and had a public forum section. Large applications of material significance to the parish would normally be considered by the Full Council and may require a special meeting.

Amenities Working Group – Councillors Downing, Farley, Forward and Palmer

To consider management of the Old Railway Line, Parkwood, the Conservation Area and play and recreation grounds. It was noted that members of the public and other parish groups could be brought into this working group to add expertise.

Further working groups may be required going forward.

WG05082024/6 Dates of the next Working Group Meetings

It was felt that a further working group meeting before the next Parish Council meeting on 11 September 2024 would be useful. The temporary Parish Clerk would advise potential dates as soon as possible.

Consideration would need to be given to:

- Updating the emergency plan
- Creating a neighbourhood plan
- Connecting with the wider parish
- Training

The temporary Parish Clerk advised that the Devon Association of Local Councils would be prepared to deliver an in-person training course to all councillors

Councillor Forward closed the meeting at 9.35pm.

Signed _____ Date _____
Leader