

# Burlescombe Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of the Asset and Responsibilities Working Group  
on Wednesday, 28 August 2024 at Westleigh URC Hall

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Downing, Eaves, Farley, Palmer and Smith.  
The Acting Parish Clerk, Mrs McGeever, was also present.

Councillor Forward opened the meeting at 7.40pm and welcomed all those present.

## **WG28082024/1 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Scott.

## **WG28082024/2 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensation requests.

## **WG28082024/3 Minutes of Previous meetings:** to approve minutes of the meeting on 5 August 2024

Councillor Forward proposed and Councillor Farley seconded the proposal that the minutes of the meeting on 5 August 2024 were a true record of the meeting. The Chair initialled and signed the minutes of the meeting.

Discussion then took place on the following items to provide recommendations to the next full Parish Council meeting

## **WG28082024/4 Clarification on declarations of interest**

Under the principle of integrity – ‘Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

It was a statutory duty of all councillors to complete a register of interests which was then sent to Mid Devon District Council and displayed on their website.

Put into context, a planning example would be that a neighbour was putting up an extension next to a councillor’s property – the councillor would declare an interest and not be involved in the discussion or the vote.

On the acquisition of services, a person’s pecuniary interests are their business interests (for example their employment, trade, profession, contracts, or any company with which they are associated) and wider financial interests they might have (for example trust funds, investments, and assets including land and property). This extends to spouses and partners in as much as the public must have confidence that councillors are putting the public interest first and not benefiting the financial affairs of themselves or their spouse or civil partner from which the councillor would stand to gain.

The Parish Council and its councillors should seek to be transparent in all its dealings which is why declarations of interest were made at the start of each meeting.

### **WG28082024/5 External participation in Parish Council meetings**

External participation at Parish Council meetings was restricted to the Public Forum where parishioners could raise matters of interest to them.

If the matter was on the agenda, then the comments could be taken into consideration by the Parish Council at that meeting, if not then the matter should be placed on the next agenda.

Each speaker was generally given a time-frame of 3 minutes and the Public Forum set at 10 minutes.

In the case of Burlescombe, resident groups such as the FVEG (Four Villages Group) or the Canonsleigh Residents Association could provide a report to the Parish Council. The report should be sent to the Clerk at least three days in advance. The report would be circulated to councillors.

Information from the FVEG may assist the Parish Council in managing an amenity like the Old Railway Line and the group's participation in the amenities Working Group may be beneficial. Another example would be the Canonsleigh Residents Group who may be able to highlight facilities required in that area of the parish.

That said, the Parish Council could call on external experts to provide information to them on a particular subject. For example, the police may attend a meeting and provide information in the public forum on anti-social behaviour or an organisation like Devon Communities Together may address the need for an Emergency Plan.

Many Parish Council's had a protocol for the Public Forum and published some information on their agenda such as the time limits placed on speakers.

### **WG28082024/6 Consideration of protocol for filming of Parish Council meetings**

The Acting Parish Clerk had carried out research as to the protocols adopted by similar sized parishes and a draft protocol for filming at a Parish Council meeting had been circulated. The protocol was designed to meet the Parish Council's statutory obligations both to meetings being filmed and to members of the public, under 18s and vulnerable adults who wished to attend meetings.

The Working Group would recommend that the protocol prepared by the Acting Parish Clerk be adopted by the Parish Council.

### **WG28082024/7 Update on website/emails and potential ways forward**

The Acting Parish Clerk advised that she had been given access to the email address [clerk@burlescombe.org](mailto:clerk@burlescombe.org). The information only pertained to emails that had been received by the Parish Council since such access had been given. All previous correspondence and that in the interim period from the resignation of the Clerk was not included in the inbox. Such correspondence normally formed part of the handover from one clerk to the next and often included valuable information on previous decisions.

The Acting Parish Clerk advised that she had been given administrative access to the Burlescombe website and its content albeit it that the agendas and minutes were currently not available but an assurance had been given that this would be reinstated on the site. The Acting Parish Clerk would download the information so that the Parish Council had an electronic record of business conducted by previous Parish Councils.

In line with best practice, the Working Group would recommend that the Parish Council move to a gov.uk website. Such a website could either simply involve the purchase of a gov.uk domain to be used by the current provider or the appointment of a specialist Parish Council website provider. To this end, the Acting Parish Clerk would obtain quotes for utilising the existing and a specialist provider.

**WG28082024/8 Update on Parish Council documentation**

See item 7 above regarding documentation currently only held on the website.

**WG28082024/9 Update on taking over responsibility from Mid Devon District Council for the Play Park**

As recorded in the minutes of the meeting on 28 August 2024, the Parish Council would be taking over the play park. This meant that a risk assessment should be carried out and consideration given to the inspection process etc.

The Amenities Working Group as appointed by the Parish Council would carry out a site visit.

It was noted that the working group would also consider the state of the perimeter fence.

**WG28082024/10 Clerk recruitment process**

The Acting Parish Clerk would circulate the advertisement via the Devon Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

The advertisement would also be placed on the noticeboards in the parish

The Acting Parish Clerk would receive the responses and these would then be circulated to a panel nominated by the Parish Council who would also appoint an interview panel.

**WG28082024/11 Ongoing review of assets and responsibilities**

Councillor Forward advised that the review of assets and responsibilities was ongoing and whilst it was a slow process, understanding the assets and responsibilities was key to being an effective Parish Council.

**WG28082024/6 Dates of the next Working Group Meetings**

The date of the next Working Group meeting would be made at the next Parish Council meeting on 11 September 2024.

Councillor Forward closed the meeting at 9.35pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Leader