

Christine Bene

Minutes of the Meeting of Meare Parish Council
Held on Monday 16th June at 7.30pm in the Meare Community Church

Present: Cllrs Bennetts (CB), C Foster (CF), T Foster (TF), Neale (AN), Wren (AW), Field (JF)
Winter (VW).

In attendance:
Parish Clerk – Liz Horne (LH)
Cllr Shearer (HS) – Somerset Council (SC)
+ 17 members of public

Public participation

30. Apologies for absence. (LGA 1972 s85 (1))
Apologies were received from Cllr T James

31. Declarations of Interest
There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes
Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 19th May 2025 having been previously circulated and considered a true and accurate record of the previous meetings and were signed by the Chair. Proposed by TF and 2nd VW. **MOTION CARRIED.**

33. Finances

- a. LH circulated annual accounts up to the end of May 2025 along with bank statements prior to the meeting. Proposed Cllr TF and 2nd Cllr VW. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- b. LH circulated a list of invoices prior to the meeting for councillors' consideration. Proposed by TF and 2nd VW. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- c. A receipt of £4785.98 has been received for VAT claimed.
- d. Bank Accounts- TF proposed that we transfer MPC current account and savings account to Unity Trust Bank. CB 2nd. **MOTION CARRIED.** Signatories will be all of those on the finance committee, currently CB, AN, TF.
- e. Parish Magazine Bank Account- TF propose we move to the account to Unity Trust and use the same signatories as the finance committee. CB 2nd. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- f. The clerk circulated a record of 36 extra hours worked since January 2025 and requested payment of £633.60. LH read out considered contributory factors to overtime hours worked See appendix A. TF proposed and CB 2nd. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- g. JF suggested we carry out an impact survey for any future events so it is clear on the impact to the clerk and any extra hours are included in costings/budget. JF proposed, and CF 2nd. **MOTION CARRIED.**
- h. Village Hall – TF has read and now agrees the Memorandum of Understanding is ok. It was agreed that this is not a legally binding contract, and no repercussions could come back on MPC. LH to forward to SALC to review. Once SALC have reviewed and so long as there are no amendments required, TF proposed that we accept this as the final draft and 2nd by AW and all to review and advise if any comments before the July meeting.

ACTION: LH to open MPC bank accounts with Unity Trust Bank.

ACTION: LH to open bank account for Parish Magazine with Unity Trust.

ACTION: LH to forward the Memorandum of Understanding to SALC for their advice.

CB

34. Summary of outstanding actions from previous meetings:
See appendix B

35. County Councillor report

- a. Children's services and resource to be brought down to local level and be more proactive rather than reactive.
- b. Local Government Boundary Commission of England review has legal responsibilities to keep the same number of wards that the county council had but put 2 councillors in each. In 2027 during the next set of elections, there will be a boundary review which suggest going from 55 areas to 96 but having 96 councillors instead of 110. Each councillor has a max of 5000 members of the public to represent. Glastonbury has been split and a small portion of it will fall under Meare and Westhay.

36. Planning:

- a. Notification only: Blackthorne House, 2 Alma Place, Main Road, Westhay, Glastonbury
- b. The clerk advised that a meeting has been arranged at Hillcrest, Shapwick Road, Westhay on Saturday 21st June at 9.30am.

37. Highways

- a. LCN – No Highways meetings have taken place.
CB raised the issue of incomplete and new white lines that have not been added to the area where the road has been re surfaced at Chaple lane and the B3152. This was reported to Highways and they confirm that they have put in an urgent request for these lines to be completed.
Health and Wellbeing – CB awaits the minutes from the last Health and Wellbeing Party Meeting.
Step, Ride, Thrive project has started and a few people are using the bus that has extended its route to include Avalon Marshes. Driving volunteers is WIP.

38. Parish Matters including:

- a. Play area
 - i. Equipment for pre-school children update- space is restricted and this item should be removed from the agenda until such times that something needs to be replaced.
 - ii. Fencing repairs - playing field committee to meet and discuss.
 - iii. Removal of football posts- outstanding action.
 - iv. Inspection report – to be discussed and reviewed with the Playing Field Committee. All suggestions to be brought to full council in July.

- b. Football pitch update- relining the pitch. Remove from the agenda until such times as the village hall is in situ.

- c. Allotments update – AN has been in touch with Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board.

ACTION: LH to write a letter to Matthew Wall from Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board

- d. SALC Health and Wellbeing – CB read through SALC's requirements for the reporting on the use of grant funds. AW attended a training course regarding SALC grants and the reporting. Report is due to SALC by 17th June 2025. It is not understood if an extension has been achieved.

ACTION: CB Proposed to contact TJ to request sight of the report to go to SALC and also contact SALC and request an extension to allow us to forward the report after the next MPC meeting in July. TF second. MOTION CARRIED.

- e. Fly Tipping- Westhay picnic area
 - i. Move bin- all decided the bin will stay where it is.

- ii. Surveillance camera- there was no appetite for the installation of a surveillance camera.

TF suggested we pay for the bin to be emptied and chase when it's not done. If we move the bin to the layby there is a cost implication.

ACTION: JF to check the bin on a weekly basis to see if has been emptied and report back to LH.

- f. Committees and outside representation- The list of these was reviewed and updated.

ACTION: CB to email councillors to advise what is entailed in being on the LCN committee and councillors to advise if they would like to be involved.

ACTION: LH to update the details of the Committees and Outside representation and circulate.

ACTION: ALL councillors to advise what keys they hold for what MPC property so records can be kept and updated. Also assist with retrieving keys from ex councillors.

- g. Parish Magazine update- CB clarified that Joe Dugdale has resigned from the Parish Magazine. One interested party is meeting with Carolne Sanderson. When a new editor is found, they should contact all advertisers to ensure they are happy to continue advertising in the Parish Magazine.

JF suggested that the core magazine could go online and those who want a printed copy can receive one.

- h. Resignation and election of new councillors- LH circulated papers received from SALC which showed the recruitment process for councillors so that all are aware including the costs involved.

- i. Website and IT

- i. Printing of meeting documents- JF proposed that councillors be able to use and edit documents on electronic devices at meetings. Standing orders suggest that this is not permitted. All to agree what is considered a device is ie lap top, mobile phone. Ipad.

ACTION: LH to add to agenda and forward the suggested part of the Standing orders for amendment and discussion in July's meeting.

- ii. Website highways submission form – MPC to consider if we allow our highways submission form to include photos. JF to add the link to SC to the highways to our website.

ACTION: JF/LH to meet and discuss the removal/amendment of our highways submission form and add a link to SC highways for parishioners to submit directly to them.

39. Correspondence

- a. Somerset Council Chairs Award Nomination- put forward Sandra Dyga who achieved the Villager of the Year award. TF proposed VW 2nd. **MOTION CARRIED**
- b. The clerk read out an email received from Sanda Dyga following her winning the Villager of the Year award. See Appendix C.
- c. Helen Mitchell emailed to suggest the telephone box that houses the Westhay defib, now needs an external clean and a coat of paint

ACTION: LH to put Sandra Dyga forward for the Somerset Council Chairs Award.

ACTION: LH to request a quote from Malcomb Sweet for cleaning and painting the telephone box at Westhay that houses the defib.

40. Next meeting will be on 21st July 2025, 7.30pm in Meare Community Church.

APPENDIX A

Clerks Notes regarding extra hours

Cllr Nicky Hoskins suggested I started monitoring the time spent on Meare Parish Council business last year and I actually started monitoring in January of this year and have accumulated 36 hours overtime. I am looking for the council to approve payment for these extra hours.

Now that I am more established as the clerk, I've had time to evaluate what the main contributory factors to these extra hours are. They are as follows:

1. lack of experience during the first audit and sorting out inaccuracies in last year's reporting plus training that I undertook.
2. Communications- some comms and responses to questions raised by me can be lengthy and include more than the response needed. I sometimes I just need a yes or no or even a one-line response. Shorter, concise responses would save me a great deal of time.
In addition, I receive comms that are cc'd to either other councillors, several other councillors or an external contact. It's not always clear to me if there is an action for me. Therefore, if you could write **ACTION** in bold capitals and my name afterwards along with what's required of me, this will make it quicker for me to process.
3. Councillors' queries - these are many and include requests for information that is already contained within agenda packs or minutes and circulated for all to view. Please can I ask ALL councillors to review agenda packs, read minutes and consider if you can glean the information, you ask me for from existing documentation before asking me to find it.
4. Wellbeing event - I think Teresa and I certainly learnt a lot from the recent event and how it should be administered. I just wanted to highlight that administering the event took much more time than I/we expected and should councillors wish to take advantage of any available grants in the future, please be aware of the level of impact and the need to cost/factor this into any projections or budgets.

Finally, I want to be as efficient as I can with my work for Meare Parish Council and incur minimal costs. Please also be assured that the points raised are not a personal attack on any individual and are observations gleaned over the last 10 months. I believe that together this council has some great skills and an enormous amount of enthusiasm that can achieve great things. I am not looking to increase my hours with MPC but would be happy to make efficiencies then re-evaluate in 3 to 6 months' time.



APPENDIX B

Action number	ACTION	Date	Assigned to	Date Completed	Notes
1	All councillors to forward any records/dates of training already completed to LH and LH to initiate a training record for Councillors. Ongoing.		ALL		Clirs NH, CB, AW sent details
2	5 fence posts from Muddy Lane into the play area behind the swings need replacing. LH to check if there is enough in the budget to cover and gain quotes	20.01.25	LH		email to contractor and cc Qlr Winter to request a price and for them to liaise/arrange to meet between them. Play area budget for 24/25 = £400 but spend is £9.5K. Budget for 25/26 £1k but £500 is for service of zip wire so not sure where funds will come from for these repairs. 26.02.25 Qlr James emailed to say repairs to fencing now urgent. Contacted Jack - contractor doing playing field fencing. He will quote on Friday. Also emailed Toby Moon and asked him to quote, cc'd Victoria and Teresa. Teresa advised that Steve, from the allotments is doing a quick fix up job until proper repairs done. 07.05.25 2 quotes for fence repairs received and 2 further quote requests sent out today
3	LH to collate information on when defibs are available to be added to the Parish Magazine and website.	20.01.25	LH/VW		Email to Qlr Gege 12.02.25 to ask where info for defibs can be found or if she has it. Requested assistance with locations and "what 3 words". 14.02.25 Qlr LG forward some info, to be actioned by LH. 02.04.25 Qlr LG now left and new guardian to assist with collating info. 28.04.25 LH emailed out a form to VW and Helen for them to complete so LH can collate all defib info in one place. 25.05.25 LH received info from Helen Mitchell re Westhay defib and resent form to Qlr VW re Church rooms defib on 30.05.25
ACTIONS from MPC meeting 17.02.25					
4	LH to contact the Housing association re the space outside the allotments needing attention.	18.02.25	LH	27.02.25	Housing association is Stonewater. 21.02.25 LH submitted an online enquiry form via Stonewater website. 26.02.25 Stonewater request photos and a marked map to show area. Email sent to Qlr James to request assistance. 27.02.25 photos and map sent to Stonewater. 04.03.25 Stonewater confirmed that have forward my enquiry to their Neighbourhoods team. 02.04.25 LH chased housing association 10.04 housing association who apologised for not getting in touch and advised that Gary Henwood would respond within 5 days 28.04.25 LH chased up again. Response stated we should hear something within 5 working days - 07.05.25 latest. 12.05.25 LH chased Housing Assoc again. 21.05.25 response received stating we should hear something within 5 working days 30.05.25 LH Chased again.
ACTIONS from MPC meeting 17.03.25					
5	TJ to coordinate the repainting project of the goal posts at the playing field. TF/TJ to coordinate dates to remove the football posts.	17.03.25	TJ		14.04.25 ongoing. TJ needs help to lift the goalposts to enable her to paint.
6	TJ to explore what repairs can be made at the allotments by the allotment holders and also explore any grants that may be available to facilitate required repairs to the allotments. LH to contact Wessex Water regarding the ditch that MPC is proposing to fill at the allotments. It is thought the ditch belongs to Wessex Water. MPC would like to pipe the ditch. LH to liaise with AN for a drainage quote. Internal drainage board to meet with AN and gain permission for the ditch to be piped	17.03.25	AN/LH		24.03.25 email to AN to ask what I need to do. 26.03.25 AN advised he and another councillor would salvage some pipes from the peat fields and place at the allotments. AN to confirm once completed. Email sent to Customer.Services@BWSL.co.uk and sloan@wessexwater.co.uk 28.04.25 along with all related paperwork received from MAA. Sloan email no longer active. email bounced back 07.05.25 LH emailed MAA members to ask for Water Bill info to pass on to Wessex Water so that they can correctly locate the area concerned. QHPC with outcome of call and await further instructions. 12.05.25 AN will contact Somerset Water Consortium to ask them to advise.
ACTIONS from MPC meeting 14.04.25					
7	LH to contact MAA Chair and request a meeting to discuss proposed changes plus request the waiting list falls under the Clerks remit. LH to receive any requests for those wanting an allotment to add anyone waiting. LH to liaise with David Naylor and Keith Brandham regarding dates for a meeting with MPC.	14.04.25	LH	13.05.25	13.05.25 LH emailed MAA and await dates plus the waiting list.
8	LH to write letters of thanks to Tom Francis, Ben Thompson (the installation electrician), Chris Francis no 1 Sileway Farm. Livewest Homes Limited, 1 Wellington Way, Skypark, Exeter, EX5 2FZ (company who Ben works for)	14.04.25	LH		24.04.25 email to Qlr's to ask if Tom and Chris Francis are a couple. 24.04.25 letter sent to Ben via email. 24.04.25 email to Ben to ask for name of manager so that I can write to say thank you. Qlr CF to advise LH on exactly who to write letters to?
ACTIONS FROM Playing Field Committee Meeting 25.04.25					
9	CF to purchase a piece of pipe to cover the spring on the gate by the disabled space	25.04.25	CF		
ACTIONS FROM MPC Meeting 19.04.25					
10	The Playing Field Committee need to assemble at the Play Area and review what is needed for the whole area with regards to fencing, spurs etc.... Information to be passed to Clerk so she can gain amended quotes	19.05.25	AN, CB, CF, TJ, TF		
11	TJ to forward the SALC report to LH to circulate to MPC.	19.05.25	TJ		
12	LH to establish who owns the land where the picnic area is.	19.05.25	LH/CB		23.05.25 CB said she would gain access to the garage and search for documents.
13	LH to advertise the vacancy for the Parish Magazine Editor on the FB page and on our website.	19.05.25	LH		
14	Clir JF to add Poppy T Event to the Website.	19.05.25	JF		

CS

APPENDIX C

Thankyou letter from Sandra Dyga – Villager of the Year

Dear Liz,

I just want to acknowledge the surprise the parish councillors gave me on Monday.

I was not expecting that Villager of the Year award at all!
What a shock!

The beautiful engraved vase and the flowers are sitting on my dining table and look lovely.

So, please thank everybody for me.

Kindest regards,
Sandra

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CS' with a stylized flourish.

3b

Invoices to be paid in April	Description	Date	Amount	Cleared Bank Account
Water2Business	Water supply to allotments	03 03 25	118.03	03 03 25
Liz Horne	April salary plus expenses plus underpayment for Feb and March 2025	30 04 25	961.08	06 05 25
Ripple	Payrole	30 04 25	10.00	Standing Order
HMRC	Employers NI Contribution	30 04 25	81.15	
Nest	Employers Pension contribution	30 04 25	13.14	
Malcolm Sweet	Village Maint-May	15 05 25	550.00	19 05 25
SALC	Code of Conduct Explained - AW	31 03 25	35.00	06 05 25
Baker and Adlam	Tractor fuel	31 03 25	75.60	01 05 25
Netwise	13 mailboxes-email	31 03 25	86.40	29 04 25
Valda Energy	Playing field power	DD	23.26	18 03 25
J Down	Playing field fencing	31 03 25	7290.60	08 04 25
West Monkton Parish Council	Poppy Honour Plaque - Taunton	24 03 25	50.00	07 05 25
Teresa James	B&Q Postcrete for fence post repairs - Allotments	28 03 25	30.00	20 03 25
Mr Treehouse & Mr Zipwire Ltd	full service to play area zip wire	31 03 25	708.00	29 04 25
AJGIBL GBP Client NST Account	Annual Insurance premium	18 05 25	1342.46	
			11374.72	

Invoices to be paid in May

Colin Foster	New signs for the Playing Field	02 04 25	44.43	21 05 25
Liz Horne	May salary plus expenses	31 05 25	941.00	28 05 25
Ripple	Payrole	31 05 25	10.00	Standing Order
HMRC	Employers NI Contribution	31 05 25	74.73	
Nest	Employers Pension contribution	31 05 25	11.86	
Malcolm Sweet	Village Maint- June	15 06 25	550.00	
SALC	Annual subs	10 04 25	655.42	
Colin Westover	Memorial Flowers	09 04 25	35.97	21 05 25
Teresa James	Zipwire repair	08 04 25	17.19	21 05 25
Community Church	Donation - room hire Jan to April inclusive	30 04 25	160.00	
Cowling Agriculture	Tractor service	23 04 25	180.00	
Valda Energy	Meare Playing Field Electricity	06 05 25	26.15	Direct Debit
Tristan Foster	Tractor Repairs and Yellow paint for road markings	06 05 25	423.97	21 05 25
Adrian M Johnstone	Internal Audit 2025	12 05 25	190.00	
Chris Bennetts	Vase- Villager of the Year	12 05 25	34.98	
			3355.70	
WELLNESS EVENT				
Childrens World Charity	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- arts and crafts	07 04 25	161.35	21 05 25
Owl Enlighting CIC	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event - owl	07 04 25	250.00	21 05 25
Somerset Toiler Hire Ltd	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- toilet hire	07 04 25	396.00	29 05 25
Daniel Small	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event - Graffiti art workshop	07 04 25	300.00	
EmPrint Ltd - Emprint and Signs	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Supply of Roadside event signs	09 04 25	242.02	02 05 25
Mark Aylward (Starlite)	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Entertainment	06 05 25	100.00	
David Thomas Cullen (Back River Rats)	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Entertainment	06 05 25	200.00	21 05 25
Georgina Sweet	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Entertainment	06 05 25	150.00	21 05 25
S M Kerslake	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Design of leaflet and programme plus printing	06 05 25	150.00	
Teresa James	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event-Various items	06 05 25	238.82	21 05 25
Ricki Buckingham Music	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Entertainment	06 05 25	100.00	21 05 25
Kamilla Wiacek	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Entertainment	06 05 25	50.00	21 05 25
Moorvale Creative CIC	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event- Sound Engineer	06 05 25	300.00	
Mrs Hazel DeGregorio (Festival Lizards Ltd)	SALC Grant-Health and Wellbeing event - tents, gazebos and stewards	06 05 25	2000.00	
Mr G Mountstevens (Party Pals)	Bluey Mascot Hire	06 05 25	60.00	21 05 25
Mrs K Munday	Trianing Session in play area	06 05 25	50.00	
Kevin Davis	BBQ	17 05 25	30.00	21 05 25
Meare and Westhay Ladies Social Club	Food	17 05 25	337.48	21 05 25
			5115.67	VAT £116.15

Invoices to be paid in June

Liz Horne	June salary plus expenses	31 05 25	920.44	
Ripple	Payrole	31 05 25	10.00	Standing Order
HMRC	Employers NI Contribution	31 05 25	74.73	
Nest	Employers Pension contribution	31 05 25	11.86	
Malcolm Sweet	Village Maint-July	15 06 25	550.00	
S M Kerslake	April/May Parish Mag Editorial	16 04 25	150.00	
S M Kerslake	June/July Parish Mag Editorial	09 06 25	150.00	
The Play Inspection Co	Play area annual inspection	16 05 25	108.30	
Chris Bennetts	Floweres - villager of the year	16 05 25	12.00	

1987.33

Chris Bennetts