

# *Frithelstock Parish Council*

**Clerk and RFO: Alan Matthewman**  
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[Minutes of the Frithelstock Parish Council Meeting](#)  
[Held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024](#)  
[In the Village Hall, Frithelstock](#)

**Present: Cllrs. C Stevens (chairman), A Hardwick, E Hunkin, M Thomas, R Lewis-Basson, S Wood and J Burrill**

**Also Present: Cllr. A Saywell (DCC)**

**Alan Matthewman (Parish Clerk) 1 member of the public**

In accordance with The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public are welcome to attend. Please use the link above to access the meeting or contact the Clerk by telephone for attendance details.

## **1. Reports from Outside Bodies**

To receive a report from Devon County Councillor, A Saywell. The Chair invited Cllr Saywell to present his report from Devon County Council'

He began by updating the council on the challenges facing the road network with the heavy rainfall followed by sharp frosts. Councillors questioned whether the road teams monitored Facebook where most residents registered problems. The short answer was no, and it was important that they used the online and telephone options available.

Drainage works are coming up and Hele Lane Dragon Patching is scheduled for Summer 2024. There was a common problem that it was the edges not potholes that were the most problematic which he took on board. Heavy and oversized agricultural vehicles were a significant problem.

The devolution agreement was approaching agreement. Budget discussions also continued but the overall situation was improving slowly with the overspend having been cut to £4.5 million which suggested that they would break even.

There had been complaints about council workmen parking in the Village Hall parking and some members of the public had received violent abuse and threatening behaviour. Cllr Saywell asked for the details in writing so that he can deal with it.

Public Participation: A member of the public complained at the late publication of the November minutes and of the Agenda for the current meeting. The clerk apologised as this had happened due to holiday and other issues. However, he pointed out that the legal requirement was for the minutes to be published within 30 working days of the meeting to which they related, and the Agenda should be published with 3 clear days notice, which for a Wednesday meeting meant Friday, leaving Saturday, Monday and Tuesday as the clear days. A problem in getting the notices onto meeting boards and the website had been something we need to address.

He also addressed an issue with the minutes of the previous meeting when different versions of the agenda appeared. The clerk pointed out that it had been his first meeting and it was important to cover all outstanding issues, some of which only became apparent later in the procedure. A comment regarding the legal status of donations to churches which had been clarified in the Levelling Up Act to permit donations, was stated to still be liable to legal challenge. The clerk pointed out that he had received correspondence from Sir Geoffrey Cox, KC, and ex Attorney General that this prohibition from the 1894 Act was no longer regarded as being in place, had been accepted by the council as the basis for future decisions.

On item C, the meeting referred to was held in July not June, as reported in the minutes. There was also a comment regarding the confusion over pension payments to the previous clerk, that an examination should be held at the end of the year and the Agar period. The clerk suggested that there was neither time nor resource and he would not deal with it until council instructed him to do something. The situation was further discussed and a decision was agreed to set up a working group consisting of John Burrill, Adrian Green (a non-councillor) and the Chair of the Council. The clerk was asked to obtain a complete print out of all transactions from April 2021 from HSBC for both accounts. Issues regarding the scale of payments regarding cemetery and other costs and donations to the church for grass-cutting and other costs were discussed.

The session concluded with a brief discussion about the need to find someone to produce the newsletter, possibly as a part of a small team.

**2. Apologies for absence: None Received**

**3. Declarations of interest**

To receive any Declarations of interest and DPI's. Members are reminded that all interests must be declared at the beginning of the meeting and prior to the item being discussed. None Declared.

**4. Minutes**

To approve and sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Available via the website. Agreed unanimously subject to the changes set out above.

**5. Matters Arising**

To consider any matters arising from the minutes not dealt with in the present agenda.

Problems with timing of refuse collection were persisting and members felt the web site was unhelpful.

**6. Planning Issues: None received.**

**7. Matters Concerning the Playing Field**

To receive further information and consider actions on hardstanding for benches at the Playing Field. Problems had been discussed with the new contractors who had no problem lifting the benches for grass-cutting.

**8. Website**

Item requested by Cllr Stevens. To discuss present website and consider any actions therefrom. Question as to whether the council should commission a new website and the decision was left over to consider the usage and potential costs. It also perhaps needed more people familiar with updating.

**9. Grass Cutting 2024**

To consider bids received for the contract for 2024-25 and decide on further action. Two bids had been received, one for £6600 which was way over the top. The other was for £2950 from an experienced contractor who will also do some hedge-trimming. There was a query as to whether, apart from the playing field, whether the council was legally obliged to provide the service. The clerk replied that there was no obligation to undertake the task, although it was regarded as a prime obligation of the council.

It was, and is hereby resolved, that the annual contract for cutting the grass be given to Robert Stoneman for £2950 per annum commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Chair to request a split in cost between the main areas.

The existing contractor had not cut anything for some months although he had been paid for the whole year up to the end of 2023-24. If he was unwilling to do so a repayment should be negotiated for the time elapsed. The Chair and/or the clerk to approach him to resolve the matter.

**10. Payments and Receipts to date and report on Bank situation**

To approve Payment and Receipts. The negotiations and agreement with a new mandate had now been done and should be operational before the next meeting.

**11. To consider and approve the Council budget for 2024-2025 and to approve the precept demand of Frithelstock Parish Council for 2024-2025.**

After a detailed discussion of the items on the budget for 2024-25 which amounted to a total spend of £10,250 a precept demand of £10,500 be requested from Torridge District Council, proposed by John Burril, seconded by Sam Wood.

**Part B. Exclusion of Press and Public for the following item.**

That the following item under Section 1(2) of the public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it involved likely disclosure of confidential information.

No items scheduled under this section.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Alan Matthewman**

**Parish Clerk**

**Frithelstock Parish Council**

**01769 560740**