

Merton Parish Council

www.mertondevon.com/clerk.mertonparishcouncildevon@gmail.com

Draft: Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 13th January 2025 at 7.30pm at the Clinton Hall.

Cllrs present: Neil Littleales (Chair) Gordon McLaughlan (Vice-Chair) Rob Nancekivel, Nigel Lang, Steve Papworth, Giles Kops,

Also present: Kerry Littleales (Clerk) and County Cllr. Andrew Saywell and District cllr. Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin.

Business Transacted

1.1.25 Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and informed the meeting that a recording was taking place to assist in the preparation of the minutes which would be deleted once the minutes had been drafted.

2.1.25 Apologies for Absence:

No Apologies received.

3.1.25 Minutes of the last minute – available on the website (Chair)

Cllr Littleales proposed that the minutes of the last meeting dated 9th September 2024 be signed as a true and accurate record. Cllr Papworth raised that the decision to send the obsolete Council laptop to CEX for recycling had been omitted. Cllr Lang Proposed. Cllr Kops Seconded. 5 in favour 1 abstention. Motion carried. (RR2024/72)

4.1.25 Declaration of interest.

No declarations made.

5.1.25 Public speaking time.

No members of the public attended.

6.1.25 District/County councillors.

a) County Cllr Andrew Saywell spoke in person about recent developments and matters for future consideration and welcomed the new Chair and Clerk.

b) District Cllr. Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin. Cllr Cottle-Hunkin went through her report with Cllrs. She also retrospectively wished to add in her thanks for the Christmas Tree Festival that the council had supported and thought it a wonderful event.

7.1.25 Current and New business.

a) Drainage issues in the square. Cllr. Littleales reported that the Community Payback Team had attended twice before the winter weather stopped further works. The Square was checked after heavy rains and it has drained. They will come back as the weather gets better to finish off. The winter leaves in the Square do need regular removal.

b) Overnight parking permits – matter moved to next meeting – but Cllr. McLaughlan noted that everyone parking there has been really good and kept of the ancient path and gullies.

c) Response from Clinton Hall re: lease of playground. Clerk read out an Email response from Clinton Hall and discussion took place between Cllrs. and Cllr Cottle-Hunkin around the application for the s.106 monies and further grants from other avenues.

Minutes of meeting held 13.01.2025 Initialled as a correct record _____

Cllrs. discussed the future needs of the playground and concerns with the maintenance costs of existing and new equipment. Cllr. Papworth suggested looking back at old minutes to help us with the way forward. Cllr. Littleales informed the meeting that we can receive assistance in submitting the application form.

The Clinton Hall had asked Cllr. Littleales via an email if the council would share the cost of drafting the legal contract/lease. Cllrs. discussed this matter and proposed that the Clinton Hall pay for their own solicitor to draft the lease, and the council will pay for their own solicitor to review and advise. Prop. Cllr Littleales, Seconded Cllr. Kops. Carried. (RR/2024/73)

d) Report on Christmas Tree Festival. Kerry Littleales reported that the Festival has cost a total of £215.49. Donations came to £345.00 for the Church Wall and the carol service refreshments came to £102 giving a total of £447.00. the festival generated a lot of good feeling and community spirit and the Carol Service was well attended which was great. We have kept the buckets, lights, spare decorations etc for next year. We will need to look again at the scaffold boards that were loaned.

e) Oak tree in Square. Cllr. Littleales reported that it will be cut on Saturday 18th January 2025

f) Back lane Access – Maintenance has taken place with hedging cut back which is sufficient. The area of concern is not maintained or the responsibility of Devon Highways.

g) Speed watch cameras. The clerk circulated an email from Beaford Parish Council about their speed cameras. Cllrs. discussed various types of cameras available and where they might be situated as well as what might happen with the current sign. Agreed to agenda for the next meeting and to contact Mark James, Andrew Saywell and the suppliers for costs in the meantime to start things rolling.

h) Vote on Poppy appeal amount – Cllrs. voted to donate £20.00. Prop. Cllr. Kops, Cllr. Papworth seconded. (RR2024/74)

i) Update on Lord Clinton room at the Clinton Hall. The Hall forgot to put this matter at their meeting and so they need to come back to us still. Cllr. Nancekivell won't take things forward until we get the ok from the hall.

7.1.25(a) Financial matters

a) To approve financial schedule as presented at Appendix A. Approved and signed by Cllrs. McLaughlan and Kops

b) Banking cheques for period 29.10.24 – 28.11.24 at Appendix A. Signed as correct by Cllr. McLaughlan.

c) To review and discuss Budget for year 2025/2026. As set out in Appendix B.

A lengthy and detailed discussion took place in relation to the draft budget between all Councillors with each category being discussed, some changed and agreed upon.

The Budget for 2025/2024 as agreed at the meeting:

STAFF COSTS		
Staff Costs	£4800.00	
Office Expenses	£450.00	
ADMINISTRATION		
Insurance	£750.00	
Training	£100.00	
IT	£295.00	
Hall Hire	£150.00	
Legal and Contingency	NIL	Carrying funds over into newly created EMR - Legal heading only(not contingency)
RUNNING COSTS		
Grass cutting /village maintenance	£440.00	
PROFESSIONAL FEES		
Audit	90.00	
Subs (DALC/NALC)	£150.00	
ASSETS		
Maintenance	£200.00	Cllr. Kops asked for cleaning of the Playground to come out of this budget.
Purchases	£100.00	Discussed various projects that may come up during the year.
Defibrillator pads	£300.00	Cllr. Papworth highlighted that £650 needs to be added to the EMR for Defib.
Play equipment	£1000.00	
GRANTS AND DONATIONS		
Standing Grants	£300	
Poppy wreath	£20.00	
Other grants and donations	£815.00	
RESERVES		
General	Nil	Councillors voted on this – carried to zero (RR2025/75)
EMR Play equip fund	£2000.00	
Precept Contingency	NIL	
TOTAL	£11,960.00	

Minutes of meeting held 13.01.2025 Initialled as a correct record _____

- i. consideration of moving Earmarked Reserves for Square Improvements and Tap fund. Proposed Cllr. Kops changing EMR Square Improvements to EMR Village improvements – seconded Cllr. Papworth. Carried (RR/2025/75)

At the 2 hour mark Cllr. Littleales proposed resolution to continue the meeting. Seconded Cllr. Papworth. Carried (RR2025/76)

- ii. Cllr. Kops proposed a Precept request of £11,960 seconded by Cllr. Papworth. Carried with 1 abstention (RR2024/77)
- iii. Cllr Littleales proposed that the budget as discussed along with the changes to EMR titles and figures be accepted. Seconded Cllr. Kops (RR2024/78)

8.1.25 Future Agenda items. Cllr. Nancekivell suggested we may be asked to contribute to the repair of the church wall.

9.1.25 Confirmation of next meeting date : Monday 10th March 2025 at 7.30pm in the Clinton Hall.

10.1.25 Confidential matters (Part 11) Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 (2)

a) Resolution required to move the Council into Part II. Cllr Papworth proposed - seconded by Cllr Kops. All in favour – motion carried (RR2024/78)

The Clerk confirmed that the audio recording had been stopped.

b) To review and sign contract of employment for Parish Clerk. (Confidential employment matters.)

c) Discuss viability of changing Bank Account

d) The Chair to return the meeting to public session to hear resolutions.

Item b) Completed

Item c) Cllr Lang proposed giving our clerk authority to pursue Lloyds Bank account again and if not a possibility to change accounts to Unity Bank. Cllr. Nancekivell seconded. Carried (RR2025/79) Cllr. Lang proposed agreeing to statement on Lloyds Bank form that Alice Rebecca Turner be removed as a signatory from the account and Kerry Susan Littleales be added. Cllr Littleales seconded. Carried (RR2025/80)

There being no further business the chair closed the meeting at 10pm.