



GENERAL PURPOSE WORKING GROUP

MEETING AT CHIDEOCK VILLAGE HALL 12th DECEMBER 2024 AT 1 PM

MINUTES

FROM: CLERK – Tan Cox
EMAIL: chideockparishcouncil@gmail.com

To: ALL PARISH COUNCILLORS		
Chair: Cllr Richard Benjamin	Cllr Caroline Parkins	
Cllr Aidan Biggins	Cllr Paul Barnett	Cllr Mick Downes

Ref		Owner
	Apologies: None	
	<u>PREAMBLE:</u> The General-Purpose Working Group is an informal group. Its role is to discuss and agree items to be placed onto the Parish Council’s Main Committee Agenda and may refer to matters that have arisen during the period. There is no set meeting schedule and meetings will happen when needed.	
	<u>MINUTES OF TUESDAY 19th NOVEMBER 2024</u> The minutes of 19 th November 2024, having been agreed via email during the period have been placed on the parish council website.	
1	<u>2025 / 26 PRECEPT:</u> The deadline for submitting the parish council’s request for precept to Dorset Council is end of January 2025. Discussions took place around the various options for the parish council to consider, the primary objective being to have enough income and precept to meet its debts and payments as they fall due. The precept will need to increase by 49.84% (39.74% actual) which equates to £19.79 increase in council tax in the year (Band D) or £1.65 per month.	

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1	<p><u>2025 / 26 PRECEPT (Cont):</u></p> <p>Explanation of why this increase in precept necessary:</p> <p>The previous parish council has kept the precept as low as possible in past years, preferring to use volunteers for essential works. From 2024 a new parish council has been formed which has not, as yet been able to retain or recruit volunteers, the work therefore has needed to be outsourced to private contractors. A new clerk was also appointed.</p> <p>The increase in precept means the parish council will be subject to an internal audit by external auditors appointed by the Audit Commission – these fees are likely to be £300-£400 per annum. Legal fees are expected to be incurred either on the trampoline issue and/or Clapps Mead.</p> <p>The newly appointed clerk costs have risen in line with current trends and pay awards. The clerk does not claim expenses other than the statutory allowance of £26.00 per month. The parish council has also instructed a payroll bureau to administer the clerk’s employment transactions at £240 per annum.</p> <p>All new councillors have needed to attend DAPTC training courses at between £30 - £50 per councillor / per session – estimated in 25/26 to be approximately £600. The 24/25 budget showed training costs as 0.00.</p> <p>Clapps Mead play area has needed to be inspected by a professional inspection company who have identified works to the perimeter fencing, chain bridge, swing bridge / slide and other play equipment, some of which will need to be replaced. The perimeter fence and gates are rotten and non-compliant with health and safety legislation and must be replaced urgently.</p> <p>The parish council has also created a new website.</p> <p>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT: Full Council agree to an increase in precept of 49.84%. The Clerk to make the necessary claim from Dorset Council.</p>	Clerk
2	<p><u>CLAPPS MEAD:</u></p> <p>TRAMPOLINE (UPDATES) Cllr RAB said that there are no further updates and will not be until the independent review has taken place by the internal auditor (as recommended by DAPTC). The Clerk said that she has spoken to the internal auditor and work will commence in the New Year.</p>	

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2	<p><u>CLAPPS MEAD (Cont):</u></p> <p>Councillors were informed of a further request made by a resident to look into an example of a trampoline located in Queen Camel, Somerset which had allegedly been insured by the parish council's brokers (Gallaghers). In response to this we sought further clarification from our brokers who reported that this claim was nonsense and none of their clients had cover for trampolines.</p> <p>PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS</p> <p>Cllrs AB and RAB have now reviewed the report from the playground inspection. Many items have been flagged as needing to be repaired and/or renewed. It is clear that the play area equipment will need to be replaced in the next few years. The parish council will continue to seek grants for the replacement of play equipment and will consult with the wider community to gather ideas for replacement equipment to meet the needs and preferences of local users.</p> <p>Cllrs AB and RAB's report is shown at Appendix 2 of these minutes.</p> <p>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:</p> <p>Full Council consider the recommendations of Cllr AB and RAB's report, in particular to seek quotations for the replacement of the play area perimeter fence.</p>	
3	<p><u>PLANNING MATTERS:</u></p> <p>P/FUL/2024/06951 Seahill House Pettycrate Lane / Sea Hill Lane Seatown DT6 6JT</p> <p>The planning application was to return Little Seahill (holiday let) to use as part of main dwelling of Seahill House. Cllr RAB and MD inspected this property and could see no reason to object to the planning application. The Clerk confirmed that she had left a neutral comment.</p>	
4	<p><u>CHIDEOCK NEWS PIECE:</u></p> <p>The Clerk confirmed the latest submission had been sent and this covers November and December. The next piece is due on 17th January 2025.</p>	
5	<p><u>REPLACEMENT SPEED SIGN ON A35:</u></p> <p>Cllr AB confirmed that the Facebook poll has been drafted and will go live on Chideock Facebook page in the next few days. The Clerk asked for a copy of the Poll in order that it can be put onto the website.</p>	Cllr AB & Clerk
6	<p><u>AIR MONITOR REMOVAL:</u></p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that she had written to Dorset Council again, a response had been received from Darran Naraine, Dorset Council Pollution Team – she will continue to chase.</p>	

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7	<p><u>REPLACEMENT SANDBAG STORE:</u> Cllr RAB confirmed that this is ongoing.</p>	
8	<p><u>GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT – START 1ST JANUARY 2025:</u> The Clerk confirmed that she had now received bids for the grounds maintenance work in the village. Councillors reviewed the Tender Evaluation Document provided by the Clerk. The commencement date of 1st January is very close, and councillors instructed the Clerk to notify the cheapest contractor (Derek Smith Gardening Services) of his success. Both contractors submitted a 'one-off' price for the clearance of the site ready for the commencement of the contract. Again, the quote from Derek Smith was the cheapest and the clerk will ask for this work to begin as soon as practicable. The Tender Evaluation Document is at Appendix 3.</p> <p><u>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:</u> Full Council consider the retrospective authorisation to instruct Derek Smith Garden Services to carry out the village grounds maintenance for a period of 3 years in accordance with the Specification contained within the Tender Documents.</p>	
9	<p><u>ST GILES CHURCH - CLOCK INVOICE</u> This was briefly discussed. The Clerk advised that no Grant Application Form had been received from St Giles Church.</p> <p>The information provided by a resident (VM) at the beginning of December 2024 does not correspond with the CPC recorded minutes of 2014, 2017 and 2020. It is suggested that the parish council write again to the PCC requesting that they complete the Grant Application Form and return it. If the PCC fail to do this, they are putting the village clock at risk.</p>	
10	<p><u>VILLAGE DEFIBRILLATORS:</u> The Clerk confirmed that she has not received any information on the bid submitted and the likelihood is that the parish council's bid was unsuccessful.</p> <p>Cllr CP suggested the Spar Shop could be approached to fund a new defibrillator that could be located on its external wall area. Cllr CP and Clerk to write letter.</p>	Cllr CP / Clerk

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11	<p><u>VILLAGE BUS SHELTERS:</u></p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that bus shelters are cleaned by Luke Bennet who charges £40 per quarter to clean both shelters. The clerk confirmed that she had contacted other window cleaners but had not been quoted a cheaper price.</p>	
12	<p><u>CLAPPS MEAD BIN EMPTYING:</u></p> <p>The Clerk has been unsuccessful in arranging bin emptying with Dorset Council and Bridport Town Council have declined to help. Cllr RAB will ask around the village to establish whether any resident would be interested in taking on the bin emptying duties on behalf of the parish council.</p>	Cllr RAB
13	<p><u>SWARCO – ERROR IN PREVIOUS YEARS:</u></p> <p>The Clerk explained that she had found an error in previous years' invoices to SWARCO and had confirmed this with the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks – their legal team). She said that she had written to SWARCO on 27th November explaining the previous clerk's error and had attached an invoice for £167.66. SWARCO have now re-imbursed the outstanding sum. The Clerk said that it is likely that the error had occurred in previous years, and it is unlikely that SWARCO would consider re-imbursing the parish council for omissions in the past.</p> <p>The letter to SWARCO was placed on the parish council's website.</p> <p>Unfortunately, a resident took exception to this and wrote another complaint to the DAPTC (Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils). The complaint alleged that the clerk and councillors are all incompetent and not fit for purpose. The DAPTC replied advising the resident that they are ill-informed and their comments inaccurate.</p> <p>The Councillors and Clerk were shocked at the actions of this resident, her comments being utterly baseless and without any substance whatsoever, the Clerk had done her best to rectify an error made in previous years, an action which residents should be grateful for, not complain about and cast aspersions upon. The resident should, at the very least, apologise for her appalling behaviour.</p> <p>The Chair commented that following the receipt of this extremely unpleasant complaint to our Clerk, the parish council had discussed the matter, and it was thought that asking the resident for an apology would be a waste of time. the Parish Council apologised to the Clerk for the unwarranted accusations that had been made against her. It was observed that the resident did not understand the full facts surrounding their complaint. The Clerk accepted the Parish Council's apology but would consider her future position. The Parish Council expressed its deep appreciation for all the work undertaken by the Clerk.</p>	

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14	<p><u>AIR QUALITY COMMUNITY GROUP:</u></p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted Dorset Council and had arranged for the Pollution Team to contact the Community Group leader Mrs A Dunn. The Clerk confirmed that a letter explaining the parish council's stance on attendance at community groups by councillors has been sent to Mrs Dunn.</p>	
15	<p><u>ASSET REGISTER:</u></p> <p>Cllr RB had drawn up a draft paper based on the current asset register with a view to visiting all assets and a) determining whether the asset belonged to the parish council, and b) determine the state of the asset and whether any repairs or replacements are needed. This matter will be rolled over.</p>	
16	<p><u>PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTING PACKAGE:</u></p> <p>The internal auditor (CA) has suggested that the parish council could upgrade its current 'excel spreadsheet' software to manage the parish council's finances and procure an accounting package (via a subscription). The Clerk has been in discussions with him about this and to facilitate this, the Clerk provided a snapshot of the prices and functionality of the QuickBooks suite of products.</p> <p>The parish council's internal auditor is also considering alternative cloud bookkeeping systems.</p> <p>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT: Full Council consider the procurement of a cloud based accounting package and authorise an annual subscription of up to £250 for this purpose.</p>	
17	<p><u>DAPTC ADVICE ON RESIDENTS' CORRESPONDENCE:</u></p> <p>Councillors have received a full training session by NW from DAPTC on 21st November 2024. During the session they were advised to take down the correspondence from residents from the website. This advice was confirmed by DAPTC in writing to the Clerk.</p> <p>The Clerk has therefore removed all resident's correspondence and will no longer place their complaints onto the parish council website.</p>	
18	<p><u>FUTURE ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA:</u></p> <p>Cllr CP advised that village resilience (flooding/power cuts etc) should be put onto a future agenda.</p>	Clerk

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19	<p><u>ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR RESIDENTS:</u></p> <p>Cllr MD said it would be good if essential information relating to road and street furniture complaints could be posted to the website and/or a notice placed on the notice board in the Spar shop. The Clerk agreed to compile this and place onto the website and notice board.</p>	Clerk

Next meeting –21st January 2025 at Chideock Village Hall, 10am

2025/26 BUDGET

Operating Income

Percentage Increase	49.84%	65.83%	77.08%	
Precept	25300	28000	29900	
Other Income	2500	2500	2500	Est
VAT	500	500	500	Est
	28300	31000	32900	

01.4.24 C/F Balance 20,981.57

Operating Costs

Clerk Costs	14,370	14,370	14,370	
General Overheads	3500	3500	3500	Est
Clerk & Cllr Expenses	350	350	350	Est
Open Spaces Maintenance*	8100	8100	8100	Est
Donation / Grants	4000	4000	4000	
Other Costs**	1500	1500	1500	Est
BLAP Contribution	80	80	80	Est
	31900	31900	31900	
Shortfall	3600	900		
Add: from Cash Reserves	3600	900	(1000)	

*Open Space Maintenance		
Grounds Maintenance Contract	6000	
Bus Shelter	160	
Contingency	1940	
		8,100

**Other Costs		
Audit Fees (Internal & External)	1000	Est
Contingency	500	
		1500

Commentary


A percentage increase of 49.84% (39.74% actual) is £19.79 increase in council tax (Band D) per year or (£1.65 per month). Appendix 4

A percentage increase of 65.83% (54.65% actual) is £27.22 increase in council tax (Band D) per year or (2.27 per month). Appendix 5

A percentage increase of 77.08% (65.14% actual) is £82.26 increase in council tax (Band D) per year or (6.85 per month). Appendix 6

Increases / % change

	24/25	25/26	Inc. £	Inc %
Clerk Costs	6250	14370	8120	130
General Overheads	2470	3500	1030	42
Clerk / Councillor Expenses	50	350	300	600
Open Spaces Maintenance	6875	8100	1225	18
Audit / Legal Fees	60	1000	940	1567
Donations & Grants	3835	4000	165	4



Town & Parish Councils
Taxbase & Precept Toolkit 2025/26

1) Select Town or Parish Council

Chideock

Taxbase Information
Band D Equivalentts

2024/25	339.0	2025/26	363.5
Increase/(Decrease) Year on Year		24.5	
% Increase/(Decrease)		7.23%	

Precept Modelling
Actual Precept 24/25 & Proposed Precept 25/26

2) Enter Target Precept

2024/25	£ 16,885.00	2025/26	£ 25,300.00
Increase/(Decrease) Year on Year		£ 8,415.00	
% Increase/(Decrease)		49.84%	

Band D Equivalent Charge
Precept Divided By Taxbase

2024/25	£ 49.81	2025/26	£ 69.60
Increase/(Decrease) Year on Year		£ 19.79	
% Increase/(Decrease)		39.74%	

APPENDIX 2

RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING REVIEW OF PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS REPORT DATED 7TH OCTOBER 2024

1. Perimeter Fencing

- Remove and replace the perimeter fencing to address issues such as multiple rotten sections and un-compliant gate closures.

2. Chain Bridge

- Remove and replace the chain bridge due to the deteriorating condition of the chains and the supporting timbers, which are deemed recommended as actions

3. Swing Bridge/Slide

- Remove and replace the swing bridge/slide entirely, as the inspector identified all aspects of this equipment as damaged and presenting a moderate risk.

4. Toddler Swing Seat

- Replace the toddler swing seat and shorten the chain to ensure safety and proper functionality.

5. Spring Car/Seat

- Treat and repair corroded metal components under the spring car/seat to prevent further degradation and ensure safety.

6. Signage Repositioning

- Reposition all signage, consolidating it onto a noticeboard so that all communication is clear and visible to visitors.

Additional Recommendations

• Grant Funding:

- Seek available grants to support the parish council in funding the necessary replacements and repairs.

• Community Engagement:

- Consult with the community to gather ideas for replacement equipment to better meet the needs and preferences of local users.

These actions aim to prioritise safety, functionality, and community involvement in improving the play area.

APPENDIX 3

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE TENDER EVALUATION

NAMES AND DETAILS OF TENDERERS

Name	Annex C	Date Rec'd	Insurance £5m	Method Statement	Risk Assessment	References	Price £	
Derek Smith's Gardening Serv's (inc. all items in Annex B) + one off quote for initial clearing - £720	✓	11 TH Nov 2024	✓	✓	✓	✓	2025 2026 2027	4995 5194 5401
Countrywide Grounds Maintenance + see below additional one off quote.	✓	28 TH Nov 2024	✓	✓	✓	✓	2025 2026 2027	6000 6240 6490
Bridport Town Council				Declined to Quote				

Additional one-off proposals:

One-off cut and collect service on the field area, with arisings removed

£600.00 +VAT

One-off clearance works to clear the riverbank around the field area and the banks of the sump (as shown below in red), including strimming the field boundary, trimming the boundary hedge, with arisings removed

£1,600.00 +VAT

