

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Freshford Parish Council Meeting 13 January 2025, 7.00pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall

Parish Councillors Present: Julian Carpenter (Chair), Rob Kilgour, John Putt

Apologies: John Adler, Elli Bate, Jennifer Clamp

In attendance: Selina Jobson (Parish Clerk), Ward Cllr Fiona Gourley

Members of the Public: Four

103. **Declarations of Interests and Requests for Dispensations**

None.

104. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved: To exercise the Parish Council's right to exclude the public and press by resolution from a closed meeting due to the confidential nature to be discussed pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 in relation to item 118 Clerk's Contract.

105. **Minutes of Meeting**

Resolved: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 as a true record.

106. **Matters Arising and Review of Actions from the last meeting**

- Proposed new noticeboard in Pipehouse – Three quotations had been received for a new noticeboard in Pipehouse. Hinton Charterhouse Parish Council would be contacted about possibility of sharing the cost and the use of the noticeboard and a proposal brought to a future meeting. Cllr Carpenter
- Re-opening of Pipehouse Lane – residents had been asked for their views on a proposal to revoke the temporary closure of Pipehouse Lane as there was little evidence that it was being used by students walking down from the Ralph Allen bus. Thirteen responses had been received, 12 were in favour of re-opening the road. B&NES had therefore agreed to reopen the road and most signage had now been removed.
- Road safety measures by the School – awaiting an update from Cllr Clamp. Cllr Clamp
- Possible re-use of matting currently on The Tynning – A resident had confirmed that it was likely that local horse stables could re-use any matting removed from The Tynning.
- Standard email addresses – awaiting an update, it was noted that this needed progressing. Cllrs Adler / Clamp
- Membership of Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) – the membership application had been completed and an invoice for £20.00 in pro-rata fees for the remainder of the membership year (until 31 March) had been received.
- Works to cemetery memorials – advice would be sought from the ICCM. Clerk
- Request for works to three trees on The Tynning – advice on work required and quotes had been requested and responses were awaited. Clerk

107. **Open Forum**

The applicant for planning application 24/04699/FUL The Glasshouse, Midford Lane, provided some detail on the application. A garden room had been removed and was being replaced. He reported that the proposal did not fall under permitted development because of its location at the front of the property. Councillors were welcome to visit the site.

A resident spoke to make the following points:

- He thanked the Clerk for her work supporting the parish council, as this was her last meeting before handing the role over.
- Given the slight rise in the tax base, he felt that the Band D charge should remain the same when considering the precept for 2025/26.
- He reported on absences in the marshalling of the roadworks at the top of Church Lane, and noted instances of large vehicles getting into difficulties when using the village as a cut through. Cllr Carpenter asked the resident to provide details of occasions when the marshal had not been present.
- He suggested that a clear walking route and safe crossing point was needed outside Freshford Primary School. Currently parents and children crossed at different points around the junction which he felt increased the likelihood of an accident.

108. **Co-option of Councillors**

An application from a resident had just been received and would be considered at the next meeting. The remaining vacancies would continue to be advertised.

109. **Planning Applications**

The Clerk had requested an extension to the consultation deadline for application 24/04699/FUL The Glasshouse, Midford Lane, BA2 7GP to enable it to be considered at the next Parish Council meeting. A response from the Planning Officer was awaited.

110. **Tree Applications**

24/04608/TCA Roselawn, High Street, BA2 7WF: T1 Silver Birch – reduce by approximately 12m in height and crown reduce by 2.5m; T2 Magnolia – reduce by approximately 6m in height and crown reduce by 1.5m.

Resolved: No comment.

111. **Planning**

111.1 Housing Needs Survey

Councillors considered two quotes for undertaking a Housing Needs Survey. B&NES and the West of England Rural Network (WERN) had confirmed that they would fully fund the survey between them. B&NES had been asked if three quotes were required and a response was awaited.

The usefulness of undertaking a Housing Needs Survey was questioned, with a suggestion that outcomes were likely to be predictable. Ward Cllr Gourley considered that a Housing Needs Survey would provide a useful evidence base that the Parish Council could refer to, which was important given possible changes in the national planning landscape.

Examples of Housing Needs Survey reports were requested.

Councillors felt that one of the quotes provided more detail about the work that would be undertaken and would be undertaken at less cost.

Resolved: to approve the quote from CNB Housing to undertake a Housing Needs Survey, subject to receipt of an example survey outcomes and confirmation from B&NES / WERN that a third quote is not required.

111.2 Proposal to Revise the Definition of Infill in the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP)

The Clerk had submitted comments made at the last Freshford Parish Council meeting to Limpley Stoke Parish Council and was awaiting a response. A meeting of councillors from both parishes to discuss this matter was seen as a useful next step.

Cllr Clamp

112. **Highways and Transport**

112.1 A36 Road Closure

The latest situation with the A36 road closure was discussed. It was noted that:

- There had been a reduction in large vehicles accessing the village since the marshals had been in place at the top of Church Lane.

- There were still a number of instances of lorries ignoring the clearly signed restrictions, diverting through Freshford village and getting into difficulties on the narrow roads and sharp bends.
- Residents had been told to report issues to the police where drivers were breaking the 7.5 tonne weight limit.
- National Highways stated that it was not possible to move the start of the closure from Church Lane to Branch Lane, as was the case during the 2008 A36 road closure, because of the access required by lorries to Stoke Mine.
- Cllr Carpenter had raised the unsatisfactory situation with the local MP.
- National Highways were confident that the road would reopen with one-way working at the beginning of March, and hoped that a full re-opening would be possible in May.
- A meeting between B&NES and National Highways was being held on Wednesday.
- Communication from National Highways to the local community had been limited.

It was agreed that the local MP would be asked to speak to National Highways about moving the closure and marshalling point from the top of Church Lane to the bottom of Branch Road, whilst maintaining access for Stoke Mine and Homewood Park.

Cllr Gourley would ask National Highways to provide additional information about the closures and mitigation measures to local residents.

113. Finance and Personnel

113.1 Precept 2025/26

Councillors considered proposed precept calculations in light of the budget figures agreed at the December meeting. Noting a slight rise in the tax base and taking into account projected spending in 2025/26, councillors felt that no change to the Band D charge was required.

Resolved: to retain the current Band D charge, at £118.81/year for 2025/26, resulting in a total precept of £39,160.14.

113.2 **Resolved:** to approve the following payments -

- £529.73 Selina Jobson for administration
- £255.00 Alan Duck for grass mowing
- £15.00 Zonkey for domain name renewal
- £20.00 ICCM membership (pro-rata for two months)

113.3 **Resolved:** to approve the bank reconciliation, noting the following payments and receipts since the last meeting: –

- £158.77 SSE electricity supply (Direct Debit)
- £305.55 James Lock for grass cutting (Standing Order)
- £333.00 Matt Snelgrove Village Steward (Standing Order)
- £6.00 Unity Trust (Bank Charge)
- £20.00 Newsletter payments (Receipt)
- £330.80 Bank interest (Receipt)

113.4 Recruitment of a New Clerk

Councillors had considered an application for the role of Clerk and Financial Responsible Officer. The applicant had met with Cllrs Adler and Kilgour and the current Clerk to talk through the role.

Resolved: to approve the appointment of Kirsty Clark as the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for Freshford Parish Council, from 13 January 2025.

It was agreed that the current clerk would work her usual hours until 31 January 2025 to enable a handover. For the following three months the outgoing Clerk would be paid on an hourly basis as required for any ongoing help with the handover.

It was agreed that a review of hours worked would be undertaken with the new Clerk after three months in post.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk should have a dedicated mobile phone and this would be looked into. Clerk

114. Contracts

Councillors received a revised contract from James Lock for grass cutting. The contract price remained the same as last year.

Resolved: Approve the contract for grass maintenance from James Lock for 2025.

A contract for the Village Steward role for 2025 had just been received and clarification would be sought of whether this included VAT. The contract would be considered for approval at the February meeting. It was suggested that a councillor should liaise with the Village Steward to have more formal control over the work undertaken.

115. Renewable Energy Project

Dates of the Bath and West Community Energy drop in sessions to provide information and to answer questions relating to the proposed Homewood solar project had been advertised to the community. Cllrs Carpenter, Kilgour and Putt confirmed they would attend the session at the Freshford Village Memorial Hall on Saturday 8 February.

116. External Meetings

Nothing to report.

117. Clerks Report

- It had been reported that the passing place on The Tynning was in need of maintenance. Councillors had noted this previously and would look into this further. Cllr Kilgour
- Lights managed by Curo leading up from Freshford Lane to the Glebe had been reported as not working and Curo would be contacted. Clerk
- A number of Freshford street lights had been reported as not working correctly and these would be reported to SSE for investigation and repair. Clerk
- The noticeboard outside the Old Surgery had water damage due to a leaking gutter from a private property. The resident had undertaken a repair previously but the problem had re-occurred. Repair or replacement of the noticeboard would be looked into. The issue with the gutter would be reported to the resident again. Cllr Carpenter / Clerk

118. Clerk's Contract

Councillors approved and signed the Clerk's contract.

119. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 10 February 2025, 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall.

Meeting ended 8.00pm.