MINUTES of the MEETING of NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
Held on TUESDAY 11th AUGUST 2026 – 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds (Vice Chair), Iain Mackie, Becky Marsh, Shelagh Laver, and Acting Clerk – Sophie Wichard.

Also present: Neal Gossage

The Chair opened the meeting by introducing Neal Gossage who had agreed to become Parish Clerk. Mr Gossage had prepared a contract for the role which had already been circulated to councillors.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW CLERK:
A motion was presented that Mr Gossage be appointed Clerk with immediate effect.
Proposed: Oliver Reynolds, seconded: Robin Wichard. All present agreed.
Mr Gossage's contract was accepted without alteration and signed by the Chair on behalf of the council.

Sophie Wichard was thanked for the great help she has been to the parish as Acting Clerk after the retirement of the previous Clerk.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr Justin Nichols.
   No Somerset Councillors attended the meeting.

2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:** these were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

3. **MATTERS ARISING:**
   Cllr Reynolds asked whether the Flood Group had offered any further guidance on the issue of riparian rights relating to landowners owning river/stream banks. It was noted that no further guidance had been received. Mr Gossage to speak to a contact he has in the county council to see if they could offer any clarity. The Chair noted that he had received a complaint regarding fencing potentially blocking the Monksilver stream at Yarde. The Chair spoke to the person involved but they had already removed the panel so no further action was required.

4. **OPEN FORUM – FOR ALL RESIDENTS:**
   There were no members of the public present.

5. **SOMERSET COUNCILLORS' REPORTS:**
   There were no Councillors from the County in attendance at the meeting and no reports submitted.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE:**

5.1 CRIME REPORT FROM AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE detailing local crime figures and patterns. Mr Gossage noted that he will be attended the forthcoming meeting with the PCC.

5.2 VERBAL COMPLAINT in relation to the potential obstruction of the Monksilver stream – noted under Matters Arising.

7. **CURRENT REPORTS:**

Chairman's Report:

There was little to report. The Chair had not attended the latest Watchet LCN meeting but had monitored the minutes for matters related to the parish. The greatest effort has been committed to finding a new parish clerk – efforts which were thankfully successful.

Local Community Network (LCN) Update:

Nothing to report as Chair unable to attend.

ENPA:

There were no issues directly affecting the parish.

Highways:

There have been no particular issues to report. We are still awaiting a decision on the reinstatement of the Blue Anchor to Minehead road. Cllr Mackie noted that it is the landowner's responsibility to ensure that overhanging branches and other vegetation are at least 5.2m above the road surface. Cllr Marsh noted that a lot of home delivery vehicles are now travelling along the narrow roads in the parish and that, because of their schedules, many are moving too fast for the road conditions although within the legal limits in most cases.

Footpaths:

No concerns had been raised. It was noted that the extreme wet weather earlier in the year, followed by the extreme hot and dry period, had promoted the growth of brambles and that this was becoming an issue in some areas.

Planning:

An application had been received for the erection of a greenhouse in Old Cleeve – the proposed structure was very small and did not warrant a response. It was noted that the Blade Mill in Yarde was now completed and up for sale. 'Pipers' – Cllr Laver had made contact with the owners who promised a planning application for the site but to date none has been received. Cllr Mackie suggested writing a formal letter from the PC as it is clear that people are living there – there was some debate about this and opinions were divided. The stock answer from the owners appears to be 'we are working on it' whenever planning permission is raised. This situation has now been going on for over two years. Discussion focussed on the use of the barn at the property (now used for storage not animals) since the accommodation was tied to the use of the barn. If there are no animals then there is no need for accommodation on site. It was agreed that Cllr Laver would frame a letter with support from Cllrs Mackie and Wichard. Consent was only ever granted on a temporary basis and since conditions have changed this must be reviewed. Langs Barn – a survey has been carried out. There are a number of conditions for consent including recording what was there originally.

2026 will see the biggest overhaul of Town and Country Planning Rules. Cllr Laver has offered to precis the proposed changes for discussion.

West Somerset Flood Group:
Cllr Nichols had sent in apologies and had not submitted a report.

Other Parish Matters:
There was a discussion about the parish noticeboards. Mr Gossage noted that notices on the website and one noticeboard is all that is required to meet legal requirements. The existing boards at Woodford and Torre are in very poor condition and it was felt that placing notices on the large board at the parish church in Nettlecombe would be more effective. This was agreed by all present.

Cllr Laver enquired as to whether a 'use it or lose it' drive through the parish magazine might have some effect but the Chair noted that we had already done that in the editions leading up to the Parish Annual Meeting but without any success. Mr Gossage noted that this is a problem common to many parish councils.

Clerk - finance:
There were only two transactions since the last meeting – an invoice from Zurich Insurance for £196. This has already been paid but they have lost the cheque (this has happened with them before) and so the original cheque was cancelled and a replacement issued. Another invoice was received from Garden Care in respect of grass cutting at the parish church. This had been estimated at £700 but was actually £540 due to a reduced number of cuts. These payments were approved.

Mr Gossage suggested moving towards internet banking and will investigate this for the next meeting. It was accepted that this would be a positive move.

8. AOB
Cllr Marsh had received a communication regarding the filling of grit bins in the parish. She was not aware of any and sought confirmation of this which was given.
Cllr Reynolds noted that some mobile phone masts had been 'dropping out' recently. It was felt that this might be weather related but the situation would be monitored as many people in the parish relied on this service.

9. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS INFORMATION:
There were no additional matters to raise at this meeting.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:
The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th November 2026 at 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.08 pm

10/11/26