

Minutes of the Meeting of Brewham Parish Council held at Brewham Village Hall on Tuesday, 14th January 2025

Present: Robert Jackson (Chair), Christopher Saxton & Patricia Stainton.

In attendance: Sue Price (Clerk), Councillor Tom Power and one member of the public.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for absence had been received from Eddie Harper, Richard Hiscock and Councillor Lucy Trimnell.

2. **Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th November 2024:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 2024 were unanimously approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Matters Arising:**

There were no matters arising that would not be dealt with elsewhere.

5. **Financial Business:**

Financial transactions:

Since the last meeting there had been income of £80 for the purchase of a cremated remains plot for Mr & Mrs Turner and all the invoices which had been approved had been paid although the cheque for £40 for the Remembrance Day wreaths has yet to be cashed.

The Clerk advised that while preparing the budget estimates for the year 2025/26 she had picked up an error in the sums held in each fund. The total for the four funds was correct but the balance in the Burial Ground Fund should be £100 less and the balance in the General Fund £100 more, so at the time of this meeting the correct balances are £384.43 and £3,012.03 respectively.

The financial transactions for the period 14th November 2024-13th January 2025 were as follows:

Bank balances brought forward on 14 th November 2024	£5,096.46
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Income

Cremated remains plot for Mr & Mrs Turner	£80.00
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Expenditure:

Donation to Citizens Advice Somerset	£30.00
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The Fund balances on 13th January 2025 were therefore:

General Fund	£3,012.03
Burial Ground Fund	384.43
Burial Ground Wall Repair Fund	250.00
Reserve Fund	1,500.00

Represented by Bank a/cs:

National Savings Bank Investment a/c	£859.03
Lloyds Bank Treasurers a/c	4,287.43

<u>Debtor</u>	
Royal British Legion – two wreaths for Remembrance Day	40.00
Bank balances to include debtor	£5,106.46
Bank balances carried forward on 13 th January 2025	£5,146.46

The Clerk requested authorisation to pay the invoice for the website hosting and domain renewal (Stuart Turnbull) - £88.37 . **It was unanimously agreed** that this invoice be paid. It was later unanimously agreed that the Clerk should purchase a Microsoft Business licence, currently costing £5.88 a month which will enable Stuart Turnbull to set her up with a Brewham email account rather than a Hotmail account.

Budget & Precept for the financial year 2025/26:

The Clerk had circulated a draft budget statement and estimates. She explained that for the current year the precept had been set at £4,400.

The Reserve Fund:

The Reserve Fund started the current year with a balance of £1,500 and this sum is held in the Fund at the time of the January 2025 meeting and it is envisaged that this will also be the balance at year-end.

The Burial Ground Fund:

The Burial Ground Fund started the current year with a balance of £223.52 and £1,400 of the precept was allocated to this Fund and to date further income of £390 has been received.

This year the expenditure for mowing and maintaining the Burial Ground was £1,500 and water rates were £129.22.

The balance in the Burial Ground Fund at the time of the January 2025 meeting is £384.43.

Nigel Payne has agreed to continue the maintenance of the Burial Ground at a cost of £1,500 for the season and so the Clerk recommended that the precept for 2025/2026 for the Burial Ground Fund should again be set at £1,400 and if no income is received and there are any additional unbudgeted costs these could be paid from either the General or the Reserve Fund. **It was unanimously agreed** that the precept for the Burial Ground Fund should be set at £1,400 for the financial year 2025/26.

Burial Ground Wall Repair Fund

There had been considerable unforeseen expenditure for the repair of the Burial Ground wall this year and the Saxton family have very generously said that they will donate a total of £10,000 in memory of the late John Saxton, who did so much work maintaining the Burial Ground wall, thus paying for the cost of this year's repair work and ensuring that there is some held by the Parish Council towards any future repairs. An anonymous donation of £1,000 was then received towards current or future repairs of the wall. The invoice for this year's repairs was £2,600, a part payment of £750 was made by the Parish Council to pay for materials and the remainder of the invoice was paid direct by the Saxton family and is not included in the Parish Council accounts.

A new Burial Ground Wall Repair Fund has been established and both donations are to be ring fenced and only spent on Burial Ground wall maintenance. Following the anonymous donation, £750 was repaid to the General Fund and the Saxton family will donate the remainder of their generous donation in due course. Therefore, the Burial Ground Wall Repair Fund has a balance of £250 at the time of the January 2025 meeting.

The General Fund:

Expenditure for everything else comes from the General Fund. The balance in the General Fund at the start of the current year was £1,543.86 and £3,000 of the precept was allocated to this Fund. The only other income expected during the year is the small amount of savings account interest which will be between £5-10.

Current confirmed expenditure for the year is £3,410.22 and at the time of the January meeting the balance in the General Fund is £3,012.03 (which is similar to the balance in the Fund in January 2024). The cost of the Remembrance Day wreaths, the website hosting and domain and the Clerk's salary will be taken from this figure before year-end.

In addition, the auditors have said that the Clerk must have a Brewham email address rather than a Hotmail one. Stuart Turnbull had advised that the best course of action would be for the Parish Council to purchase a Microsoft Business licence and he will then be able to set up a Brewham email address for the Clerk. The current cost is £5.88 a month (so £11.76 for the remaining two months of the current financial year). It was unanimously agreed that the Clerk should go ahead on this basis.

If there is no further income or expenditure then the balance in the General Fund at year-end will be just over £1,900 meaning a year-end surplus of about £388 and so a precept of £3,000 should be sufficient to cover the expenses for the year 2025-2026.

It was unanimously agreed that the precept for the General Fund should be set at £3,000 for the financial year 2024/25.

If there is no further unforeseen income or expenditure between now and year-end then the total held in the four funds/bank accounts at year-end will therefore be about £4,038.

The effect of the proposed budget for the year 2025/2026 would be a net expenditure of £4,475 (as attached).

However, the Clerk noted that Councillors need to bear in mind that the next edition of Below the Tower will be due in 2026, probably costing in the region of £600+; the defibrillator will need new pads and probably a service and there could be additional expenses resulting from any cuts to services made by Somerset County Council. The Parish Council was also extremely lucky to have received the generous donations for the repair of the Burial Ground wall and but for these it would have been necessary to increase the precept considerably.

The precept was last increased by £400 for the year beginning April 2023 and the Clerk recommended that Councillors consider a small increase for the year 2025-2026 rather than make a larger increase in subsequent years and because, as seen this year, there can be large unforeseen expenses from time to time. Inflation in December was 2.5% and if this was applied to the current precept the figure would be an increase of £110, 3.5% would be an increase of £154 and 5% would be £220. After discussion Councillors agreed that if the precept had been increased by 2.5% for each of the last two years this would total £440 and that this seemed a reasonable amount for the precept to be increased by for the year 2025-2026.

After further discussion about possible future expenses, the budget was confirmed for 2025-2026 and **it was unanimously agreed** that the precept for the year 2025/2026 should be raised by £500 to £4,900, this being £1,400 for the Burial Ground Fund, £3,000 for the General Fund and £500 to the Reserve Fund.

It was further agreed that it would be prudent to consider increasing the precept each year by a small amount to try and avoid any sudden large increases in future years.

It was unanimously agreed that the Chairman should sign the Precept Notification Form for 2025/2026 requesting that the precept be set at £4,900.

6. Planning Applications:

i. Decisions on applications already considered by the Parish Council:

- a. 22/01688/FUL - Land OS 0006, Gladwill Farm, North Brewham, BA10 0JS –Application for change of use of agricultural hard standing to allow for siting of a mobile showman’s wagon trailer conversion for holiday let accommodation. Decision awaited.
- b. 3/00864/FUL - Lindum Farm, Bruton Road, Brewham, BA10 0JF - The erection of steel framed agricultural machinery storage shed. Decision awaited.
- c. 23/01410/FUL – Land opposite Jerrards Farm, Hammer Street, North Brewham. - the erection of a new dwelling for agricultural occupancy for a family member. Application withdrawn.
- d. 24/02267/LBC – Charcroft Farm, South Brewham, BA10 0LG – replacement of windows and doors on all elevations of dwellinghouse. Decision awaited.

No new applications had been received.

7. Burial Ground, Churchyard, Common Land and Village Amenities:

There were no comments anyone wished to make or points to discuss.

8. Roads:

a. Outstanding matters:

Although the Highways Department continue to mend potholes they are a continual problem with new ones appearing since the recent heavy rain, snow and frost.

The Clerk had once again reported the large pothole at the Strap Lane junction at Border and had received a reply to say that it had been inspected and risk assessed but a safety defect had not been found. A safety defect is where the road is found to be unsafe in accordance with national guidelines. Councillor Power asked that the Clerk send details and a photograph and he will take this up with Highways.

The Street Naming & Numbering Officer had been in contact to advise that the official address for Osip has now been registered as Osip, Hardway, Bruton, BA10 0LN and this address is held by Somerset Council and Royal Mail. The property owner has been advised to update their address details with their own personal contacts, utility companies and so on and mention was made regarding their website being updated. However, so far, she can find no legal points in their Policy which empowers the Council to stop a business or individual from using an inaccurate location address on their personal or business website.

b. New matters:

The Clerk will continue to monitor and report new problems throughout the Parish.

9. Footpaths & Bridleways:

Outstanding matters:

After the footpath at Swanton Farm was re-opened at the beginning of November, the Clerk had received an email from Eve Wynn on 19th November to advise that due to an open sump being discovered when the roadside gate was being installed, she had had no choice but to place a 21-day closure on the path. On 7th January she again emailed to confirm that this footpath is open and available and that she had removed the closure notices.

The bridge repair department still need to repair the bridge beyond that and the Clerk is waiting for an answer from them about when they envisage doing this work which is now very overdue.

10. **Report from County Councillors:**

Councillor Power had circulated his report for January.

The Boundary Commission has launched a consultation on new division boundaries in Somerset to help shape new council divisions for Somerset Council - www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England wants to hear people's views on where they live, to help make sure that the new divisions reflect the size and shape of local communities. An electoral review is being carried out to make sure that each local councillor represents about the same number of electors, and that the divisions they represent reflect community identities. The Local Government Boundary Commission has decided that the number of councillors in Somerset Council should be 96 which is a reduction from the current council, which has 110 members. He urged everyone to complete this consultation which closes on 20th January.

The Council has plans to develop its first Local Plan. They are launching a Call for Sites which is a 6-week period where landowners, developers, and site promoters are invited to submit land they want to be considered for future development.

Anyone wanting to keep up to date with the Somerset Local Plan and other planning policy news can sign up To the Plan-it Somerset Newsletter - www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/plan-it-somerset-newsletter-sign-up.

11. **Report from the Police:**

The Clerk had not received a report from the Police. In the icy conditions last week there was an overturned tractor wedged across and blocking the road on Hardway just before the turning to Alfred's Tower. It is assumed that this had been stolen from the owner at a Wincanton address.

12. **Dates of future meetings:**

The final meeting of the financial year will be held on Tuesday 14th March 2025.

It was agreed that meetings would continue to be held bi-monthly on the second Tuesday. Meetings for the year 2024/25 will therefore be held on Tuesdays, 13th May, 8th July, 9th September, 11th November 2025 and Tuesdays, 13th January and 10th March 2026.

13. **Open Forum:**

There were no questions or comments.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.07pm.

These minutes were unanimously approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman at the meeting of Brewham Parish Council on Tuesday, 14th March 2025.