COPPLESTONE PARISH COUNCIL ORDINARY MEETING – 1st July 2025 at 7.30pm held at the Methodist Church Meeting Room

MINUTES

Present – Cllr Clark (Chairman), Cllr Glover (Vice-Chair), Cllr Turner, Cllr Eastman, Cllr Dhinsa, Cllr Sharp, Cllr Jim Cairney (County) + 15 Residents.
Cllr Steve Keable (District Council - Planning) attended at 21.10 for 15mins
Apologies – Cllr Youngs.

1.	**Declarations of Interest** None provided.
2.	**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 3rd June** The minutes of the last meeting are not available due to the resignation of the Clerk. These have not been handed over as of yet. These are to be approved at the next meeting if available.
3.	**Open Forum** - An opportunity for the Electors to address the Parish Council. The Parish Council encourages the use of an Open forum. 15 Residents in attendance. **Resident 1** – They have been flooded 3 times this year despite being in contact with numerous departments and agencies for several years about the drainage issues causing flooding of her property. The last flooding happened days after receiving the dry certificate due to the flooding that occurred January & February 2025. This is now expected to carry on until the end of the year. She now has a solicitor involved and is also trying to speak to network rail regarding the kerbstones holding the water on the A377; this used to be able to run down alongside the railway line but now is unable to do so. Back in February after the event Highways attended to Jet and clear what they could outside of their house & road. What was informed as being 3 hours work turned into 3 Days, resulting in 6 wagons of waste being taken away. The resident has informed Devon Highways and the Environment agency numerous times in the past. She has also paid for the road to be privately inspected with CCTV and reports that the drain has collapsed further down into the village. This footage will be provided to the PC if accessible. **Cllr Clark informed resident that after meeting with a Thomas Aldridge from the Environment Agency, they will be looking to camera that whole area to make sure it is fit for purpose.** **Resident 2** – A resident who is co-ordinating drainage and flooding issues from Bevin Square has reported that she is currently trying to clarify who is responsible for the issues that they have experienced recently. It is unclear what parts of Bevin Square are adopted and who deals with the unadopted parts. However the A377 which is part of the problem is adopted. To complicate the issue, bungs were found to be left in multiple drains which may be a developer issue. It has been mentioned that these bungs are only to aid rodding of the pipework, but clarification is to be sought by the resident. Collection of the debris had been agreed and will be arranged to be carried out soon. **Cllr Clark has spoken with the Environment agency, they are going to approach land owners with suggestions to help with surface water run-off.**

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It was suggested by a resident that the CCW (Consumer Council for water) may be of assistance but this was thought to only be of help regarding supply of water, clean water and sewage related issues.

A general discussion about the general state of the village arose with the consensus being Copplestone has been let down by MDDC, Highways etc. The following points being raised:

- Works due to be starting on the pub but nothing appears to be happening – The PC are sent the same update as on MDDC's website, please check here for the up to date information - https://www.middevon.gov.uk/road-closure-and-cross-hotel-copplestone-update . It was noted the PC have no powers regarding this situation.
- Delays with the pub ongoing with the diversion route damaging peoples cars due to the road surface (Ditches/ruts at the side of the road, pot holes etc). These have been reported multiple times but nothing done. This is the only way out the village; the road is not suitable for the vehicles driving it, causing cars to have no choice but to pull into ditches to allow traffic to pass. Please pass the report numbers and information and the PC can follow up on these.
- Traffic coming in and out of Copplestone, causing huge delays and a nuisance to residents alongside it. One resident is concerned of the pollution and will be requesting a monitor if this is to continue.
- Highways vans are driving the wrong way out of the temporary one way system.
- Traffic lights failing, causing one resident to run up and down the A377 to direct traffic.
- Elderly people struggling to get out of the village with the bus stop being closed, also struggling getting out the village due to the length of the diversion on foot.
- Problems with the walkways and lack of walkways causing people to walk on the roads.
- School Children being dropped off and having to navigate the extremely busy A377.
- A report of multiple Ambulances having to wait at the lights because they are unable to get through. One resident reported making the decision to stop at the garden centre before reaching Copplestone, due to a family member becoming ill and making the decision to call an Ambulance on the side of the road. She feared if she became stuck at the lights she would not have had time to get the family member the treatment required in time.
- Surface repairs to footpaths done recently in the village including around the Sunnymead are not fit for purpose. It is reported they melt on sunny days.
- Overgrown hedges causing people to walk in the road, especially on the A377 with annoyed drivers that have been stuck in traffic. The hedge alongside the railway noted as being one of them.
- The sandbags at the bottom of Bewsley hill that are in place to hold the fencing and signs in are causing issues with the rain water. With the drains not taking water away on Bewsley hill due to being blocked, debris is being washed down the hill and getting stuck on the sandbags. In turn stopping the flow of the water, causing it to pool outside of the properties. These drains have been reported.
- Village verges are generally unkempt, with weeds growing unchecked due to the

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	discontinuation of weed-spraying. • Path along side of the allotment is overgrown making parts difficult to pass – Dave Brassington to be contacted about this. • Sunnymead Park – Gate not closing. This has been looked at but we require access to money to progress. • Sunnymead Park play equipment – Damage still not fixed. We require access to money to purchase. • Recreation ground car park chipping reported as running off and blocking drains – PC to look into a solution for this. • With the current problem with the drains causing flooding could sand bags be provided – Cllr Clark to send email to request this. • Electronic speed sign – This needs further looking into due to being made aware of a section notice being needed. The PC are to look at alternative options. Cllr Jim Cairney has informed us, more 20mph zones are to be looked at, this is another route to investigate again. Cllr Jim Cairney (County Councillor) - Firstly he understands the frustrations and is going to contact Steve Tucker of Highways first thing in the morning re: Roads, Drains and Flooding. The delay in the demolition of the pub was due to an application to reinstate the pub. The current work to take the front wall down and bring the scaffolding back inside the foot print of the pub could not be done because an agreement over the party wall couldn't be reached. Cllr Jim Cairney has spoken with Meg Booth about the problems and it was said "it would be solved as soon as we can".
4.	**Principal Authority Reports:** **Agenda item 6.1** To receive County Cllr report **Agenda item 6.2** To receive District Cllr report Cllr Jim Cairney (County Councillor) report: Being the newly elected councillor, I will attend the meeting regularly. A lot of the points mentioned are starting to come to fruition, the problem being there is such a deficit at county hall now. The biggest problem is for 15 years now, all councils have been starved of money so things haven't been done, gullies haven't been cleaned, and storm drains are not working properly. All these things if they had been maintained we would have been in a better way. The Highways are in a dreadful state and the amount of money it's going to take means that it can't be done quickly. We are going to do as much as we can, quickly, but you are going to have to bear with us which I'm sorry to say. As time goes on with what we want to do and we are looking to do, will take a while. The Tarmac repair was done by people who must have had money, and said "let's do that" for no reason when you could have fixed the main road coming into Copplestone. If money had been spent on that there would have been far better benefit. Hopefully with joined up thinking, we will be far more strategic because I think that the people that are looking to take over the county council are more in favour of doing what the public want, and what the public need. There is now a whole load of new councillors, I'm one of them. I'm still getting my feet under the table and coming to terms with all the technology, all the reports and emails, with the pothole complaints. I am doing as much as I can, but it is absolutely overwhelming and is taking a little while to be as proficient as the last county councillor. Everything that has been discussed here today, you will have my full backing, so all you will need

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to do is fire off an email to ask for my support. You will get an email back from me saying absolutely, because if the community is running well and everybody is happy and people are getting what they need to get done, everybody has a better life. That is what we are here for, making everybody feel a bit better. Words are cheap, actions take a bit longer. So again, I'm not going to promise that this is going to happens overnight, at least I will what we are discussing here needs to be done to help this place be a whole lot happier.

The PC has offered our services and we are willing to help wherever we can.

Cllr Steve Keable (District Council - Planning) - Arrived at 21.10 due to other meeting needed to be attended in his ward:
Flooding due to drainage issues - Copplestone is in Cllr Jim Cairney's ward, however my ward is local to Copplestone and has also experienced flooding due to the lack of maintenance of drains and gullies. I was not aware of these issues until tonight; residents have caught me on the way in and have been showing me photos and videos of the ongoing issues in the village. I will meet with Cllr Cairney to see what he is doing and provide him with extra support to help the village.
The PC welcomed this and appreciated any extra weight Cllr Steve Keable could provide with the situation, it was also noted the PC believe the situation is becoming dangerous now.

Highways – Whilst the village has the current issues ongoing now would be the time to get other issues fixed. Cllr Jim Cairney should be a point of contact to raise this higher because the PC cannot get any response from highways. Steve Tucker of Highways is back in the office tomorrow so I will chase this up along with Jim.
Flooding due to gullies and drains not being cleared or maintained properly is an issue in my wards also, even though the inspection routine has been reported as being cleared or no problem and signed off as completed. Being caught by residents on the way into this meeting tonight, being shown photos and videos of Copplestone flooding along with the what has happened in my wards has really pushed home this point.
There are now a number of cases to support the issues on going in the village. The risk to public safety is acknowledged, people are being asked to walk on footpaths that are flooded, being forced to walk in the road with oncoming traffic. This being coupled with when the road floods, people still have to walk through it currently being the only route, causing people to be pushed into the danger. Public safety trumps everything, I just didn't know about the issues.
Any evidence of issues can be forwarded to me and I will pass on all the historic reporting of the issue. I will speak with Cllr Jim Cairney and want to provide answers to the community. Cllr Steve Keable is fully supportive of the ongoing issue in Copplestone.
The question was raised if the PC has invited Highways, but we cannot contact anyone to do so. We explained that the resident has been flooded not only from the wash of the cars but the water running all the way for Bow's direction. It is noted that the village now has the environment agency involved, and are trying to get highways involved but are meeting resistance.
The PC floated the idea of hiring the camera equipment to inspect the drains as much as we can ourselves, but have been advised to hang off from this. More evidence is better but we have been asked to wait to see where we can get with the highways. It is noted that these are historic issues with drains – not just a one off.

The Village pub – The most up to date information on the progression of the pub will be on MDDC webpage. Please be assured that work is continuing in the back ground.

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5.	**Planning** **Ref: 25/00766/HOUSE** **Proposal:** Erection of 2 storey side and single story rear extension following demolition of existing lean-to garage and rear conservatory. **Location:** 29 Sunnymead Copplestone Credition Devon EX17 5NQ **Parish:** Copplestone **Link:** https://planning.middevon.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage **No objections.**
6.	**Finance and Governance** **Agenda item 8a – To receive the report of the Internal Auditor and agree any actions.** No report has been provided to the parish council. **Agenda item 8b – To consider if any events that occurred during the financial year have consequences, or potential consequences, on the councils' finances. If any such events are identifies, to determine whether the financial consequences need to be reflected in the statement of accounts.** VAT – It has been noted this hasn't been claimed back. This needs to be done and backdated where possible. **Agenda item 8c – To Approve the completion of Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2004/2005.** This cannot be approved. Bank account statements have not been provided, nor has the necessary information been shared to enable the Parish Council to access the bank accounts. **Agenda item 8d – To Approve Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2004/2005.** This cannot be approved. Bank account statements have not been provided, nor has the necessary information been shared to enable the Parish Council to access the bank accounts. **Agenda item 8e – To Confirm the dates for the exercise of public rights.** Unable to confirm, this will be done when supporting documents are available. **Agenda item 8f – To determine the effectiveness of the internal Audit Process.** Deemed to not be effective. **Agenda item 8g – To appoint an Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025/2026.** Voted to agree to appoint an Internal Auditor. The PC agreed Tina Charteress would be a good fit noting the competence and independence Tina would bring as the internal auditor. All 6 members present agreed by a show of hands.
7.	**Member Statements** **Cllr Glover** – A local resident emailed MDDC regarding the litter picking and grass cutting of Sunnymead park. The local resident regularly picks up litter in this park and has observed an ongoing issue: each time the grass is cut, it is done without first clearing the litter. As a result, the litter is shredded by the mowers and scattered across the park.

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	MDDC has advised that the matter falls under the responsibility of the Parish Council and has forwarded the correspondence accordingly. The MDDC officer copied in the grass cutting team on the email and acknowledged that he had not yet responded to resident regarding the matter. Cllr Glover is to follow up on this matter. Could we look to see if the 7.30PM meeting start time could replace 7pm, this is to be put on the agenda for the next meeting? - This is to be added to the agenda. **Cllr Sharp** – A local resident emailed regarding the use of the CRA football field for dog walking and training. This area is not permitted for the exercise of dogs, so unfortunately this cannot be allowed. - Cllr Sharp to follow up on this. A Local flood risk management online workshop invite has been received – Cllr Sharp & Cllr Glover agreed to complete this. **Cllr Turner** – Provisions for repairing the wet lay have been acquired and are in the possession of Cllr Turner. The current temperature is too warm to perform a repair. When cool enough to repair Cllr Turner knows someone who deals with wet lay and is may be able to assist the repair. **Cllr Clark** – Requested that a meeting in August would be beneficial due to the current vacancy for a Clerk. - The PC is aware this is a time sensitive issue and would consider calling an extraordinary meeting if required.
8.	There were no further topics for discussion and the meeting concluded at 20.55pm A Part 2 meeting was undertaken at the request of the Chairman. The meeting was used to discuss for the following: a) To determine a job description for the new Parish Clerk. b) To agree a process to advertise for the vacant position of Parish Clerk. c) To consider the recruitment of a locum Clerk to manage the council pending the recruitment of a permanent clerk. d) To agree the purchase of a telephone and laptop for the Clerks use. It was agreed that a locum Clerk will be appointed pending the recruitment of a permanent Clerk. All points were discussed, voted on, and unanimously agreed by the six Parish Council members present. The Part 2 meeting concluded at 21.40PM **Date of Next Meeting – 2nd September 2025**

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