



Chideock Parish Council

Mr George Dunn

5th March 2025

Dear Mr Dunn.

RE: FULL COUNCIL MEETING – FEBRUARY 2025

Thank you for your email of 27th February 2025. Your concerns regarding the February Full Council Meeting have been noted, and we will address each of your points below.

- **The Meeting started with the announcement that the previous Chair (Cllr Parkins) had resigned and was therefore not present. Due process for the election of a new Chair was not followed and therefore the Meeting was invalid.**

You are erroneous in your belief that due process had not been followed. The Council had reported in its General Purpose Meeting Minutes (18/2/25) that the resignation of Mrs Parkins was imminent, and that the parish council will adopt a 'rolling chair' procedure until a new chair can be found. The Clerk also reported the resignation to Dorset Council (in accordance with regulations). Dorset Council then produced a Notice of Vacancy that was put onto the parish council's website and onto the village notice board located at the Spar.

- **Continuing the practice of simply "nodding through" decisions previously made at the private General Purposes meeting.**

You have made no specific basis for the complaint. We would remind you that 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. We also note that Chideock Parish Council have held Finance and General Purpose meetings from 2000 to 2014. Therefore, there is nothing new in this practice.

- **Almost no discussion on anything at the meeting - outside of the Democratic Period**

Councillors discussed the matters on the agenda.

- **Cllr Aiden Biggins' statement - was not an Agenda Item and therefore is invalid.**

Cllr Biggins read a brief statement relating to the precept and budget queries that were raised by yourselves at the January meeting. We thought this would be helpful to you and aid your understanding of council business.

- **No proper details of Payments made in the Period**

You are mistaken in this allegation, all payments made by invoice were documented on the agenda and will also feature within the minutes of the meeting. These are due shortly.

- **No details at all shown for Clerk's wages in the Period**

The Clerk's detail of salary is protected under Section 40 of the Data Protection Act. This Act relates to the processing of personal data which is confidential between the Clerk and the parish council.

- **Apparent unawareness by Cllrs of any reason for the Clerk's enormous salary increase in the Precept (2025 - 2026) - In response Cllr Benjamin said that "he did not know". It seemed that no Cllrs were actually aware of the increase in Clerk's costs to £14,370 from the previous year's budget of £5,654. Yes, that's almost £9,000 extra!!**

The Clerk's detail of salary is protected under Section 40 of the Data Protection Act. The Clerk has a contract of employment signed by the parish council.

- **Will Council please advise what Salary Scale Point the Clerk is on, and what her qualifications are for the crucial Role of Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)**

The Clerk's detail of salary is protected under Section 40 of the Data Protection Act. This Act relates to the processing of personal data which is confidential between the Clerk and the parish council.

- **Also, why Council has let a payroll contract through a local accountant when surely this must be a part of the Clerk / RFO's duties.**

To ensure adequate financial controls are embedded within the payroll system, it is good practice to separate the calculation of the payroll payment and the payment of monies. This is not a new concept and is widely implemented. We note this financial control was absent during the tenure of the previous clerk.

- **Council's continuing refusal of timely answers to residents' letters etc. Effectively barring public discussion**

You have made no specific basis for a complaint, just more of the same issues that have been raised time and time again. Under our Zero Tolerance Policy, we politely ask that this issue is not raised again.

- **Clerk calling a member of the public a liar.**

The Clerk has listened to ex-councillors bully and harass the current councillors mercilessly over the previous months without intervening. The member of the public blatantly and maliciously lied about the conduct of the Clerk, attempting to damage her reputation, the Clerk was entitled to state that the comment made 'was a lie'. Under our Zero Tolerance Policy we will not tolerate any further untrue statements about either the Clerk or Councillors.

- **Cllr lack of awareness of “who empties the Clapps Mead bins” / Cllr amazement at the suggestion that actually one of them should do it**

The Council is attempting to resolve this issue. This was explained to you during the meeting.

- **Council inaction on the In-ground Jumper issue including the £985 payment owed to The Friends of Clapps Mead. And what was Cllr Benjamin talking about regarding children under 3 being at risk of brain damage on a jumper??**

The council advised that it would discuss the matter at the next General-Purpose Meeting as to how we will proceed regarding the refunding of this amount. Can we be clear that Chideock Parish Council does not own an In-ground jumper it owns a trampoline and all future reference to an in-jumper will be recorded in the minutes as a trampoline.

The Council has kept you up to date with the current stance taken by the insurance company Chideock Parish Council has chased this matter both in writing and verbally and is still awaiting a response from the Brooker.

The manufacturer’s literature for the trampoline clearly states that the intended age group for this in-ground trampoline is three years and over. RoSPA’s advice on the age of children using such equipment is they should be over six years.

- **Cllr failure to properly update the Meeting concerning issues of Clapps Mead - including The Grafton Bequest / The earlier dissolution of the Management Committee etc**

The Council has kept you up to date with the current stance taken by the insurance company. Under the terms of the Council insurance policy, it is unable to delegate its insurance responsibility to a third party which is why we must seek legal advice to resolve the matter as this means we need to change the terms of the original Grafton Bequest.

- **Agenda items being ignored - Under Item 6 (Public Participation) Public comment was to be invited on the PC stance regarding the Church Clock and their proposed letter to Smiths of Derby. This item was completely ignored.**

This item was included in the ‘Public Participation’ section of the agenda. It highlighted that the parish council intends to write to Smiths of Derby. The item invited comments from members of the public and none were received. You are erroneous in your belief that it was ignored, it simply wasn’t commented on by members of the public.

- **Total inappropriateness of the PC’s new “Zero Tolerance Policy”. Agenda Item 9 recommended that “Full Council consider the Zero Tolerance Policy and adopt”. There was NO consideration of this Policy. It had been previously agreed at their Private General Purposes Meeting and was simply “nodded through” at this Meeting.**

The Parish Council is entitled to adopt a Zero Tolerance Policy. This is not a unique policy and was taken from another council.

- **Cllrs continual concern at how long the Public Participation takes. At this Meeting it finished at approximately 10:38 followed by the Meeting itself finishing at approximately 10:43. YES that was just a subsequent 5 minutes for everything else on the Agenda!!!!**

The Parish Council highlights "It is at the Chair's discretion how long statements are based on the number of individuals attending the meeting. As a guide and in order to conduct all business on the agenda, this period should not exceed 15 minutes unless suggested by the Chair. In this instance the Chair allowed 38 minutes for public participation. We do not consider there is a case to answer.

Yours sincerely

Chideock Parish Council

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