

# WITHYCOMBE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

**Draft Minutes of the Withycombe Annual Parish Assembly held at the Memorial Hall on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015 at 7.00pm**

## **PRESENT**

Parish Councillors: John Fulwell (Chairman), Steve Crossman, Chris Thomas, Ian Hutchings, Jean Humber, Karen Evans, Emma Wright.

Also present: Tim Taylor (West Somerset District Council), Christine Lawrence (Somerset County Council), Members of Public.

In attendance: Andy Giles (Clerk)

**The Meeting was digitally recorded**

## **1. CHAIRMANS WELCOME**

John Fulwell, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed those in attendance and opened the meeting at 7.00 pm.

## **2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Roger Hurst.

## **3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2014**

The minutes were circulated. It was proposed by Jean Humber and seconded by Richard Barnham that the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014; this was unanimously agreed and the minutes were signed by the Chairman.

## **4. MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman responded to a question, raised at the 2014 Parish Assembly, regarding action on litter collection. He advised that the Parish Council had now acquired litter collection equipment which was stored at Court Farm. This equipment had been used on a number of occasions by volunteers to clear litter from areas within the Parish.

## **5. TITHOLES ORCHARD DEVELOPMENT**

Jean Humber and Emma Wright delivered a presentation to update those in attendance regarding the current position with the development. They also explained what was envisaged for the play area, including the layout of the area and proposals for the type of equipment that would be installed. Emphasis was placed on the fact that this would be a community facility and any ideas and suggestions from local residents, regarding the development of the area, would be very welcome. The Chairman advised that anyone who had any ideas or suggestions, or indeed if they had any queries regarding the development, should contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance.

## **6. TOWNSEND FARM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

Tim Taylor reported the latest position regarding the affordable housing development at Townsend Farm, Carhampton. He advised that the site would deliver twenty affordable homes (sixteen for rent and four shared equity). There would also be fifteen open market houses on the site. It was hoped that the development would be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Tim Taylor advised that anyone in the Parish, who was interested in acquiring one of the affordable homes, should register with the Housing Authority as soon as possible.

## **7. REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

**Withycombe Active Living Group:** The Chairman read out a written report provided by Roger Hurst (Active Living Co-ordinator). The report summarised the activities of the Group, which meets twice a month, and continues to deliver services to older members of the community, despite ongoing financial constraints. Roger thanked everyone who had supported the Active Living Group throughout the past twelve months.

**St Bartholomew's Church / Rodhuish Chapel Council:** Richard Devitt delivered a report on the activities of St Bartholomew's Church, Rodhuish. He also advised on a number of events that will be held at the Church throughout the year.

**Withycombe Memorial Hall:** Mr Richard Barnham delivered a report on behalf of the Trustees of Withycombe Memorial Hall. He advised that the Hall served as a memorial to residents of the village who had given their lives in the service of their country and it provided a social centre for the village. He reported that the Hall continued to thrive, thanks to the efforts of the Management Committee. However there was a great deal of spare capacity and increased use of the facility would be welcome.

**Public Rights of Way:** Mr Chris Adams delivered a report as the nominated Public Paths Liaison Officer (PPLO) for the Parish. He explained his role as the link between the Parish Council and Somerset County Council on issues associated with Rights of Way. Chris updated the meeting on activities that had taken place over the past twelve months. He advised that most paths within the Parish had been inspected during the year and the majority of problems that had been reported had been rectified.

Chris advised that he was standing down as the PPLO for the Parish but he had managed to find a willing volunteer to take over the role. Kerrie Thorne of Christopher's Cottage had volunteered to take on the role of PPLO and the Chairman of the Parish council advised that the formalities of her appointment would be dealt with at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked Chris for the excellent work that he had done as PPLO for Withycombe, over a number of years, which was appreciated by everyone in the Parish; this was unanimously supported.

**Withycombe Short Mat Bowls Club:** Emma Wright delivered a short report on behalf of Mike Burnett who was unable to attend the meeting. She reported that the Club meet regularly on Thursday evenings; however it is under supported and in need of additional members. Emma advised that the Club was in a position to offer free lessons to anyone interested in joining.

**Withycombe Wheels:** Jean Humber delivered a report on behalf of Withycombe Wheels. She advised that Withycombe Wheels was set up in 2003, to provide transport for those in the community that did not have access to their own transport. Withycombe Wheels is a member of the West Somerset Car Scheme Partnership; transport is provided by volunteer drivers who deliver a much needed service to a number of residents of the Parish. Jean advised that the many of the journeys undertaken by Withycombe Wheels, were made for medical reasons.

**Withycombe Parish Council:** The Chairman delivered a short report on the role and activities of Withycombe Parish Council. He advised that the Parish Council is invited to comment on all planning applications made within the Parish. He also advised that the Parish Council liaised with the various other bodies that have a responsibility for the Parish such as Somerset Highways Authority, Avon and Somerset Police Authority and the County and District Councils. The Parish Council fulfilled an important role in ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and effectively throughout the Parish.

The Parish Council Clerk advised that there would be a Parish Council election in May 2015 and that the Council had a maximum of seven available seats. He advised that the Parish Council must have a minimum of three persons sitting on the Council for it to be legally constituted; to date only two nominees had been put forward. The two people nominated were Chris Thomas and Emma Wright and they would be elected to the Council 'unopposed'. The Clerk advised that the West Somerset District Council would now call a second election to see if other people would come forward. The Clerk urged those present to consider standing for the Parish Council, as it was important for the community to have a strong and active Parish Council.

## **8. SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT**

Christine Lawrence delivered a report as County Councillor responsible for Withycombe. She began by thanking the Parish Council for all its hard work during the past year. Christine paid tribute to John Fulwell (Chairman) and Jean Humber (Vice Chairman) who were both retiring from the Council at the forthcoming election and she thanked them for their service to the local community.

Christine advised that Somerset County Council was experiencing a time of financial constraints due to the current economic climate, and, whilst there had been some budget cuts, every effort was being made to limit the impact on services.

Christine thanked Roger Hurst for the valuable work that he does as coordinator for the Withycombe Active Living Group. She also paid tribute to all residents of Withycombe, who contribute to the improvement of their local community.

## **9. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT**

Tim Taylor delivered a report as District Councillor with responsibility for Withycombe. Tim reported that the District Council had managed to agree a balanced budget despite considerable financial challenges. He advised that a partnership arrangement with Taunton Deane Borough Council, put in place recently, enabled services to be delivered more efficiently in both districts. Tim suggested that this type of partnership working arrangement, would become more common throughout local government in the future and that some structural changes, may also be necessary in order to reduce the cost of public services. He advised that service delivery in West Somerset faced particular challenges, due to the demographic profile in the area and the higher percentage of older residents. Tim provided an update on a number of topical issues including affordable housing, broadband and the development of the East Quay in Watchet.

Tim closed his report by stating that he was not standing for re-election to the District Council in May 2015. He thanked everyone in Withycombe for their support during his time in office.

## **10. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None.

## **11. CHAIRMANS CLOSING COMMENTS**

Before bringing the meeting to a close, the Chairman advised that he was standing down from the Parish Council at the forthcoming election. He also advised that Jean Humber would be retiring from the Parish Council after many years of service to the community. The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Jean for the outstanding work that she had done for the Parish in recent years; this was unanimously supported by everyone present.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Date \_\_\_\_\_