

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Monday 7th December 2015 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: Emma Wright (Chairman), Stephen Crossman, Tony Connolly, Chris Thomas, Richard Barnham, Amanda Gardiner, Susan Gill.

In attendance: A Giles (Clerk)

Also present: Members of the Public.

For future reference attendees will be referred to in these, and subsequent, minutes by their initials viz:

Emma Wright (Chairman) EW, Chris Thomas CT, Stephen Crossman SC, Tony Connolly TC, Richard Barnham RB, Amanda Gardiner AJG, Susan Gill SG, Brenda Maitland-Walker (West Somerset District Council) BMW, Christine Lawrence (Somerset County Council) CL, Andy Giles (Clerk) AG.

The Meeting was digitally recorded

1667 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

CL and BMW – accepted by the Council.

1668 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

CT declared a personal interest in the Highways issues related to large vehicles travelling through the village.

1669 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS:

Parish Council Meeting and Public Open Session held on 7th September 2015.

The minutes of the above meeting having been circulated prior to the meeting, were agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

1670 MATTERS ARISING from the minutes

1670.1 Planning Obligations – Parish Priorities: - The Clerk advised that he had drafted and circulated four priorities for Councillors to consider, these are set out in the table below.

	PRIORITY	DETAILS
1	OUTLET FOR LOCAL PRODUCE	Storage equipment, furniture and fittings to enable the sale of local produce.
2	PROVISION OF A PLAY AREA	Provision of play equipment such as swings / slides etc. as determined by the Titholes Play Area Working Group.
3	PROVISION OF SAFE CAR PARKING	Compacted gravel car parking to be provided as part of the Titholes Orchard development. Also lighting to be installed in the car park.
4	PROVISION OF PUBLIC SEATING / BENCHES	Benches / seating to be installed at various sites in the Parish, including the proposed Titholes Orchard Play Area and Activity Field.

The Clerk explained that the purpose of having Parish Priorities in place was to assist the Local Planning Authority when negotiating with developers over the development of sites within the Parish in the future. It may be possible to obtain funding or other forms of contribution to be used to deliver these stated priorities under terms set out in Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It was agreed that the priorities set out in the table above together with the pre-existing priority of safety improvements to the entrance to the village from the A39, be forwarded to the West Somerset Planning Authority.

It was further agreed that these priorities would be reviewed periodically and amended if necessary.

1670.2 Planning Application – 1 Park Cottages: - Councillors debated the issues associated with the building works that had taken place at Park Cottages, Rodhuish and the associated planning permissions that had been granted. The Clerk reported that he had raised the matter with Mr Peter Lean, Planning Enforcement Officer with West Somerset District Council, who had agreed to look in to the matter subject to clarification of the specific issues involved. It was agreed that CT would contact Mr Lean with a view to clarifying the matter.

1670.3 Hole in the Road – Lower Street, Withycombe: - Discussed later in this meeting with other Highways issues (See Minute 1674.1).

1670.4 Casual Vacancies: - The Clerk advised that there were additional forms to be signed by the three Councillors co-opted on to the Council at the last meeting in order to complete the co-option process. These were circulated and completed.

1670.5 Exmoor National Park – Issues Faced Parish Councils: - The Clerk reported that he had received phone call from Mr Mike Ellacott of Exford who is the Parish Council representative on the Exmoor National Park Management Committee, who had offered to attend a future meeting in order to discuss issues that might be faced by other Parish Councils within the National Park.

It was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to contact Mr Ellacott to see if he was aware of other Parish Councils that had experienced problems associated with large vehicles travelling through small villages (see discussions in the Public Open Session which preceded this meeting). If so, it may be beneficial to invite him to attend a future meeting in order to discuss how such matters have been addressed elsewhere.

1671 PLANNING

Planning Applications Received

1671.1 The Clerk reported that no new planning applications had been received since the last meeting.

Planning Applications Approved

1671.2 The Clerk reported that the following planning applications, previously considered by this Council, had now received approval:

Application 6/41/15/103 – Simons Steep, West Street, Withycombe – First Floor Extension.

Application 6/41/15/104LB – Oak, Oak Lane, Withycombe – Replacement Windows / Doors.

Application 6/41/15/005 – Treborough Lodge Farm – Timber Studio / Hobby Room.

1672 **FINANCES**

1672.1 **Budget Monitoring Report:** The Clerk circulated a budget monitoring report for the period 1st April 2015 to 30th November 2015. The Clerk confirmed that the Council's finances were healthy with 'free funds' standing at £7,727 at 30th November 2015.

RB commented on the funds set aside for the Titholes Play Area and asked how this fund had been built up. It was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to investigate the history of this fund and report his findings at the next meeting.

1672.2 **Bank Reconciliation Statement:** The bank reconciliation as at 30th November 2015 agreed with bank statements and was signed by the Chairman as an accurate record. Bank balances were:

➤ Account 95304622	£ 894.28
➤ Account 44356501	£16,266.16
Total	£17,160.44

1672.3 **The following payments were approved:**

1. A Giles (Clerk) salary / expenses (Oct 2015–Dec 2015)
£615.40
2. HMRC Tax due on above payment to Clerk
£134.28
3. The Rest & Be Thankful (Active Living Expenses)
£160.00

1672.4 **Active Living Account:** The Clerk circulated a statement detailing transactions on the above account. The balance being held by the Parish Council at 30th November 2015 amounted to £1,103.00. It was agreed that the statement be sent to Roger Hurst for his information.

1673 **BUDGET AND PARISH PRECEPT 2016/17**

The Clerk referred to documents, circulated prior to the meeting, which set out a draft budget for 2016/17 based on an increase in the precept of 3%, together with details of the financial implications of alternative rises in the precept.

Councillors debated a number of options for both the budget and the associated increase in the parish precept. RB expressed the view that if the Parish Council's financial position was healthy and that reserves were relatively high, it may be possible to avoid asking council taxpayers to pay more in 2016/17. The Chairman advised that the planned Titholes Play Area would place a significant demand upon the Parish Council's finances and that it had been Council policy to set aside funds over time rather than have to implement a large increase in the precept when the play area was handed over from the developers.

It was agreed that the current policy of setting aside funds on an annual basis in order to meet the future costs of the Titholes Play Area would continue.

It was also agreed that the parish precept for 2016/17 would be set at £6,450, an increase of 3% and that the draft budget circulated prior to the meeting be approved.

1674 **HIGHWAYS**

1674.1 **Hole in the road – Court Place Farm:** The Clerk reported that he had been advised by Peter Owen of Somerset Highways Group, that because this problem had occurred due to a collapsed culvert, the matter was now being dealt with by the Structures Team at County Hall. The Clerk was instructed to liaise with the Highways Department, together with Councillors CL and BMW, with a view to ensuring that the repairs are carried out as soon as possible.

1674.2 **Damage to wall near Withycombe Memorial Hall:** The Clerk reported that Somerset Highways Department had been notified of the problem; they were now seeking to secure funding in order to carry out the necessary repairs.

1674.3 **Damage to bridge wall – Combe Lane:** The Chairman advised that the bridge wall at the corner of Combe Lane was damaged and in need of repair, she also advised that a number of residents felt that the wall was too low and needed to be built higher. The Clerk reported that Somerset Highways Department had been informed and that the Bridge Inspector would now investigate the matter

1674.4 **Damage to the Ford – Rattle Row:** The Clerk reported that he had received a letter from Mr M G Nichols of Edgemoor, Rattle Row, Withycombe who had advised that stones within the ford had become dislodged and that repairs were necessary. The Clerk advised that he had reported the matter to Somerset Highways Department who will investigate the possibility of undertaking repairs in the Spring of 2016. The Clerk confirmed that he had forwarded a copy of the response from Somerset Highways to Mr Nichols.

1674.5 The Chairman asked Councillors for their views on the outstanding maintenance issues within the Parish, which were the responsibility of other Authority's and whether there was a way that the Parish Council could get involved in order to expedite repairs. It was agreed that, whilst in principal this was a good idea, the legal and practical issues involved would be too complex.

It was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to write to the Somerset Highways Department offering support and ask if there is anything that the Parish Council can do in order to help resolve these outstanding issues.

1674.6 **Problems Caused by Large Vehicles:** Councillors formally approved the actions agreed in the Public Open Session which preceded this meeting. The Clerk was instructed to contact Somerset Highways and ask that a representative attend a future meeting of this Council. He was also instructed to inform Councillors CL and BMW of the situation.

1675 **RIGHTS OF WAY**

1675.1 **Beastway Lane – Clearance of Vegetation:** The Clerk reported that Somerset County Council Rights of Way Team had been advised of the need to clear this bridleway. Mrs Helen Hughes, a member of the public who was in attendance, advised that the work had been carried out within the past two or three days and that the lane was now clear.

1676 **COUNTY COUNCILLOR and DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

The County Councillor (CL) and District Councillor (BMW) had tendered their apologies for this meeting and were not in attendance.

1677 **TRANSPARENCY CODE FOR SMALLER AUTHORITIES**

1677.1 **Procurement of Audit Services:** The Clerk advised that recent changes in legislation had resulted in the Audit Commission being abolished; this will lead to changes in the way that Parish Councils are audited in future. He advised that small Councils like Withycombe would no longer have to submit an annual financial return to be audited as had been the case in the past; however an auditor will still need to be appointed in case there are questions from electors that needed to be resolved. The Clerk informed Councillors that the National Association of Local Councils had established a Sector Led Body in order to procure audit services for this new role.

It was unanimously agreed that Withycombe Parish Council would join the Sector Led Body for the procurement of audit services.

1677.2 **Website Publication Requirements:** The Clerk advised that changes to the audit process referred to in Minute 1677.1 above will mean that the Parish Council will be required to publish certain information on a 'free and publicly accessible website'. He explained that this could be done either by the Parish Council having its own website or, alternatively, entering into a partnership arrangement with another organisation such as the District Council. The Clerk advised that he had obtained quotations from two website providers and sought advice from neighbouring parish councils who had already established their own websites. The Clerk explained that it may be possible to claim funding from Central Government to help meet the costs of setting up a website and circulated a document detailing the breakdown of this claim.

Following a lengthy debate it was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to approach IS OK DESIGNS of Cats Lane, Minehead who had provided a quote in the sum of £315 to set up the Parish Council's own website. The total costs of getting the website up and running were estimated to be £850; this included training and support costs. It was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to submit a claim for reimbursement of these costs.

Councillors agreed to proceed on the basis of the two quotations received acknowledging that a third quotation, normally required by the Council's Financial Regulations, would not alter the decision to proceed with IS OK DESIGNS.

1678 **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

1678.1 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from Somerset County Council advising of proposed changes to bus services throughout Somerset. These changes were likely to involve cuts to services, although the proposals would not adversely affect services to Withycombe. The Clerk advised that the County Council was in the process of consulting Somerset residents on these proposals and, if Councillors wanted to participate in the consultation process, they could do so via the County Council website up until 11th January 2016.

1678.2 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from Somerset County Council advising of proposed changes to the Concessionary Fares Scheme including changes to Community Transport. These changes would involve a cut in the discount applied to Community Car Schemes such as Withycombe Wheels, from 50% to 25%. Correspondence had also been received from Mr Peter Humber, Chairman of the Withycombe Wheels Community Car Scheme, urging the Parish Council to write to Somerset County Council in support of Withycombe Wheels. Correspondence had also been received from Atwest (Accessible Transport West Somerset) urging support for Community Transport and also seeking financial support in the form of a grant. This issue was also discussed in the Public Open Session which preceded this meeting when Mrs Jean Humber spoke in favour of Withycombe Wheels and urged the Parish Council to support the scheme.

It was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to write to Somerset County Council in support of Withycombe Wheels. Councillors did not accede to the request from Atwest for financial support.

1678.3 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from the 'Keep Britain Tidy' organisation advising of a campaign to 'Clean for the Queen' in the run up to Her Majesty's 90th birthday. The correspondence was noted. SC reminded Councillors that the Parish Council had purchased equipment to facilitate the collection of litter from around the village and that he was storing this equipment should anyone wish to volunteer to use it.

1678.4 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from West Somerset Council regarding a consultation process that it was currently undertaking regarding its Community Asset Transfer Policy. The correspondence was noted.

1678.5 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from West Somerset Council regarding changes to their Street Naming and Numbering services; in particular it was now introducing a charge for this service. West Somerset Council also wanted to know if the Parish Council wished to be consulted on street names for future developments in the Parish. It was agreed that the Parish Council should be consulted and the Clerk was instructed to inform West Somerset Council accordingly.

1678.6 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from NHS England confirming that permission had been granted for dispensing premises to be relocated from Brendon Hills Surgery, Torre, Washford to Dunster Surgery, 3 Park Street, Dunster. The correspondence was noted.

1678.7 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from Somerset County Council regarding proposed changes to age ranges at Dulverton Schools. The correspondence was noted.

1678.8 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from the RSPB advising of a survey being conducted regarding issues that villages might be experiencing with seagulls. The correspondence was noted.

1678.9 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from West Somerset Council advising that the Western Somerset Leader Programme 2015-2020 was now open for business and it was estimated that the scheme would bring over one million pounds in grant funding to the area. SC advised that it may be possible to obtain funding from this programme for the proposed website referred to in Minute 1677.2 above, should other sources of funding not materialise. The Clerk was instructed to investigate this matter further should the need arise.

1678.10 The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from Lucy Back of Savills / Smiths Gore, advising that the groundwork for Titholes Orchard would be commencing shortly and that the appointed contractor was Gerald Barons & Sons. The correspondence was noted.

1679 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

RB asked that the subject of informing residents of Parish Council Meetings and Parish Council business be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____