

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Friday 17th July 2015 at 6.30pm

PRESENT

Councillors: Emma Wright (Chairman), Chris Thomas, Stephen Crossman, Tony Connolly.

In attendance: A Giles (Clerk)

Also present: Brenda Maitland-Walker (WSC).

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, Brenda Maitland-Walker (West Somerset District Council) BMW, Christine Lawrence (Somerset County Council) CL, Andy Giles (Clerk) AG.

The Meeting was digitally recorded

1623 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

1624 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

1624.1 EW was proposed by SC seconded by CT and elected as Chairman by unanimous decision.

1624.2 CT was proposed by SC seconded by EW elected as Vice Chairman by unanimous decision.

1625 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

1626 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE AND REGISTER OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

The Clerk circulated forms to the Chairman and Councillors in order that they formally declare acceptance of office. Forms required for the Register of Members Interests were also circulated. Completed forms were returned to the Clerk who was instructed to forward copies to the Electoral Services Officer at West Somerset Council.

1627 ANNUAL RETURN

1627.1 **Statements of Account and Governance Statement:** The Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2015, which must be completed by all Local Councils and returned to the Audit Commission, had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Return which includes the Statements of Account and Governance Statement, was approved by Council and signed by the Chairman.

1627.2 **Internal Audit:** The Clerk reported that it had been necessary to appoint an Internal Auditor to review the Annual Return. The Clerk advised that he had appointed Mr Bryan J Howe of 23 Alexandra Road, Minehead to undertake the work. The appointment of Mr Howe was approved by Council.

1627.3 **Internal Audit Report:** The Internal Audit report prepared by Mr Howe had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk advised that the issues included in the report had now been addressed. The Internal Audit report was accepted and approved by Council.

1628 AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES

The Clerk advised that the recent changes in personnel had left the Council with only one serving Councillor, Chris Thomas, on the Bank Mandate. This would mean that in the short term, cheques would have to be signed by the Vice Chairman (Chris Thomas) and the Clerk (Andy Giles) as these were the only signatories left on the Bank Mandate. It was agreed that urgent payments would be signed by CT and AG until such time as the Bank Mandate could be amended to include all Councillors.

The Clerk circulated forms to be completed by Councillors to allow the Bank Mandate to be updated.

1629 FINANCES

1629.1 The following payments were approved:

1. Came and Company – Insurance Premium	£294.81
2. A Giles (Clerk) salary / expenses (April 2015–Jul 2015)	£851.68
3. HMRC Tax due on above payment to Clerk	£179.04
4. Jean Humber (Reimbursement Status Printers – Newsletter)	£26.80
5. West Somerset Council – Election Costs	£100.00
6. Somerset Association of Local Councils - Subscription	£77.02
7. Mr B J Howe (Internal Audit Fee)	£84.30
8. R M Hurst (Active Living Expenses)	£42.84

1630 TITHOLES ORCHARD

A revised plan for the Titholes Orchard Play Area had been circulated prior to the meeting. The plan now includes grading / levelling of the play area and access gates which had been omitted from the original plan. The Council approved the revised plan and the Clerk was instructed to inform Lucy Back of Smiths Gore accordingly.

1631 STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1631.1 The Clerk advised that the problems which arose following the election in May when the Parish Council was not 'legally constituted' had meant that the Councils Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had, on occasions, not been strictly adhered to. The Clerk explained where the difficulties had occurred and that no serious problems had arisen. Councillors acknowledged that Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had not been strictly applied during the period in question and agreed that the actions taken had been in the best interests of the Council. It was also agreed that Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be reviewed in the near future, in order to ensure that they continued to meet the needs of the Council.

1631.2 The Clerk advised that the Councils Standing Orders currently state that if less than four Councillors are present, no business can be transacted. It was agreed that this Standing Order should be amended to allow business to be transacted with only three Councillors present until such time as all seats on the Council are filled.

1631.3 SC recommended that Councillors endeavour to identify other parishioners who might be prepared to be co-opted on to the Council. Councillors agreed that every effort should be made to fill the vacant seats on the Parish Council.

1632 COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk advised Councillors that consideration would need to be given to the way the Parish Council communicates with parishioners in future. He explained that former Councillor, Mrs Jean Humber was no longer prepared to edit and publish the parish newsletter. There may also be issues with the management of information posted on the Council's notice boards. It was agreed that this issue be deferred until a future meeting.

1633 MEETINGS

Following the change in personnel serving on the Council the Clerk sought confirmation from Councillors that Wednesdays remained the most convenient evening to hold Council meetings. He advised that the Memorial Hall was currently available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays apart from a few exceptions. After some debate it was agreed that Monday was Councillors preferred evening. The Clerk was instructed to make further enquiries to see if it would be possible to use the Memorial Hall on a Monday evening, even if this meant meeting in the snooker room.

1634 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Clerk advised that the former Chairman had been responsible for preparing and reporting budget monitoring information. It was agreed that future reports would be prepared by the Clerk.

1635 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Clerk advised that there were a number of items of outstanding business that had not been included on the agenda for this meeting due to time restraint. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 3rd August subject to the availability of the Memorial Hall.

1636 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

^{1636.1} ***Drains Culver Lane:*** TC reported that he had been made aware of a problem with the drains in Culver Lane. The matter had been raised by Reverend Prebendary J Thorogood of Holden Cottage, 2 West Street, Withycombe; BMW confirmed that she had also been made aware of the issue.

^{1636.2} ***Broadband:*** SC raised the issue of Superfast Broadband and what might be the likely date that this facility would become available within the Parish, The Clerk was instructed to investigate the matter and update Councillors at the next meeting.

Councillors expressed their thanks to the Clerk for ensuring that the Council continued to function, despite the difficulties and uncertainties that arose, following the recent elections.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm.

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____