

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SESSION ON THE 7TH SEPTEMBER 2015 IN THE MEMORIAL HALL, WITHYCOMBE at 7pm.

PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

For future reference Councillors and the Clerk will be referred to in these, and subsequent, reports by their initials:

Emma Wright (Chairman) EW / Chris Thomas (Vice Chairman) 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

1. These notes formulate a record of the Public Open Session held on the 7th September 2015.
2. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

3. Parish Priorities

The Clerk advised the meeting that the West Somerset Council Planning Authority had requested that the Parish Council review the priorities for the Parish and to notify them accordingly. The Clerk explained that if the Parish Council had a set of agreed and approved priorities in place, it would assist the Planning Authority when negotiating with developers who sought planning permission for sites within the Parish in the future. He advised that the Planners might be able to secure funds from developers to be used to deliver these priorities, under the terms of Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Clerk went on to explain that at the last meeting of the Parish Council held on 3rd August 2015, Councillors had decided that residents should be consulted as part of the process of setting the priorities for the Parish. The Chairman advised that since the Parish Council meeting held on the 3rd August, she had written to every household in the Parish seeking their views and inviting them to attend this meeting.

The Chairman invited comments and ideas from those present regarding future priorities for the Parish.

A suggestion was put forward regarding the possible development of a local produce outlet. This was favourably received by the meeting and it was agreed that this should be explored further.

It was agreed that the issue of priorities should be deferred until the meeting in December 2015.

4. Parish Council – Vacant Seats

The Chairman advised that in her letter to residents referred to in paragraph 3 above, she had explained that three of the seven seats on the Parish Council were currently vacant and that she had invited residents to put themselves forward to fill these vacancies.

The following residents, present at the meeting, volunteered to be co-opted onto the Parish Council; Richard Barnham, Sue Gill and Amanda Gardner.

The Clerk explained that the aforementioned people would now be formally considered by the Parish Council in the meeting that followed this Public Open Session and, subject to the approval of the Parish Council, they would be co-opted on to the Parish Council.

5. District Councillor – Presentation of Report by (BMW)

The Chairman welcomed BMW and introduced her to those present.

Hinkley Point 'B' Non Domestic Rates Adjustment: BMW reported that the revised calculation for Non Domestic Rates payable for Hinkley Point 'B' power station had resulted in a substantial reduction in income for West Somerset Council. BMW advised that West Somerset Council was exploring all options to try and find a suitable way forward; these included a reduction in services and seeking assistance from Central Government. Richard Barnham asked BMW what would happen if West Somerset Council's financial resources fell below recommended levels. BMW advised that expenditure would have to be cut in order to ensure the Council's reserves remained adequate. If this could not be done it was likely that some form of Central Government intervention would be necessary.

West Somerset Flood Group: BMW advised that the West Somerset Flood Group was now well established and had been successful in securing funding for a number of projects in the area. She advised that there was a possibility of securing funding from the Somerset Rivers Authority for the clearance of water courses in the Parish; anyone aware of locations where this might be appropriate, should contact her. She reported that the programme for clearing water courses had recently been reviewed and the frequency of clearance had, in many cases, been increased.

Isolation and Loneliness Conference: BMW reported that a conference aimed at addressing isolation and loneliness issues would be held at the Beach Hotel in Minehead on Saturday 17th October 2015; places were still available if anyone should wish to attend.

Broadband: BMW reported that the BT bid had not met the value for money standard for the second phase of the project, so this phase of the work had now been retendered. BT would however remain responsible for delivering the first phase of the work, which was still on schedule; the date advised for the connection of the Withycombe area to the service was October 2015.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions before declaring the Public Open Session closed.

The Public Open Session ended at 7.25 pm.

Chairman

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