

# WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SESSION ON THE 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2016 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 / Richard Barnham RB / Amanda Gardiner AJG / Susan Gill SMG / 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 7<sup>th</sup> March 2016.
2. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. She then introduced Debbie Dennis who is the Village Agent for Withycombe. Debbie delivered a short presentation and explained her role with Community Council for Somerset and how she could offer free, confidential and practical support to local people and community groups. Councillors discussed a number of topics with Debbie including the Titholes Orchard Play Area development. Debbie explained how she may be able to assist with funding advice etc. when the project gets underway.  
The Chairman thanked Debbie for her input to the meeting.

### **3. County Councillor Report**

CL explained how Somerset County Council had developed a new 'vision' for Somerset and details could be found on the County Council website. Aspirations set out in the vision for the County include a Somerset University, new business parks and new energy initiatives as well as proposals for new housing.

CL reported that the County Council had put in place a devolution plan aimed at maximising investment and boosting productivity in the south west. The plan aims to create better-paid jobs, improved road, rail and broadband links and more homes for the region's increasing population.

CL also reported that the County Council had agreed its budget for 2016/17 which included around £8m savings together with £75m capital investment in roads, schools and economic development. The budget also included a rise in Council Tax; 2% of the rise would be for funds that would be ring-fenced in order to fund Adult Social Care, a further 1.25% would generate funds for the Somerset Rivers Authority with a further 1.99% having been added to raise money for essential services.

The Chairman thanked CL for her input to the meeting.

### **4. District Councillor Report**

BMW reported that West Somerset Council had now set its budget for 2016/17. She advised that all budgets would be very tight and that setting the budget had been a very challenging exercise. She explained that financial restraints have meant that West Somerset Council is now looking at a number of partnership options, which it hopes will save money and reduce costs in the future.

BMW also reported that the Somerset Flood Group was now in place and that those parishes in the Group with flood plans had successfully secured additional funding towards flood prevention measures.

BMW advised that she had contacted Somerset Highways Department about the outstanding issues in the Parish (See Minute 1687 of Parish Council meeting which followed this Public Open Session); RB advised BWW that further damage had been caused to the stream wall in Withycombe. BMW agreed to ask the Highways Department to include this in the schedule of work to be undertaken in the village.

The Chairman thanked BMW for her input to the meeting.

**5. Members of the Public**

The Clerk reported that he had received correspondence from Mrs Jean Humber on behalf of Withycombe Wheels. Jean was unable to attend the meeting but wished to convey her thanks to CL for her support during the campaign against the proposed cuts to local transport schemes. Parish Councillors also expressed their gratitude for the work done by CL to protect this vital service.

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

The Public Open Session ended at 7.30 pm.

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Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Date