

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SESSION ON THE 5TH SEPTEMBER 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 / David Tilley DT / 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 5th September 2016.
2. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 p.m. She welcomed those in attendance who included Mr David Tilley who had been co-opted on to the Council at the meeting held in May 2016.

Flood Plan

The Chairman welcomed Dr Teresa Bridgman to the meeting. Dr Bridgman is the secretary of the West Somerset Flood Group and had been invited to attend in order to provide the Parish Council with advice on the preparation of a Parish Flood Plan. Dr Bridgman advised Councillors to consider what they thought the Parish might need in terms of a Flood Plan; she also asked Councillors what they felt the main issues were regarding water management within the Parish.

SC stated that he felt that the Parish did not really need a formal flood plan. He felt that there was a need to raise awareness regarding the maintenance and monitoring of water courses and to identify issues that might lead to problems in the future. SC suggested that much could be done voluntarily by local people but public bodies such as Somerset County Council and the Environment Agency needed to fulfil their obligations regarding maintenance issues.

Councillors discussed a number of detailed matters regarding various watercourses within the parish and the potential problems associated with them. BMW advised that in some cases permission may need to be obtained from either Somerset County Council or the Environment Agency, prior to any work being undertaken locally by volunteers to maintain watercourses.

The general consensus was that a very formal and detailed flood plan was not necessary; however a list of local contacts and a record of necessary actions would be useful. Dr Bridgman advised that West Somerset Council would no longer be supplying sand bags however, if the village had a flood plan, it is likely that the Parish Council would qualify for funding for its own sand bags. Funding might be available through the Community Resilience in Somerset Partnership (CRISP) for sand bags; vulnerable properties might also qualify for Property Level Protection (PLP) funding. Dr Bridgman suggested that the Parish Council contact the Somerset County Council in order to seek further advice regarding the preparation of a flood plan. BMW also suggested that the Parish Council send a representative to the meetings of the West Somerset Flood Group where more information would be available. Dr Bridgman agreed to forward details of future West Somerset Flood Group meetings to the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked Dr Bridgman for attending the meeting and for the information she had provided.

4. District Councillor Report

Switching Energy Suppliers: BMW circulated details of a news release regarding switching energy suppliers. She advised that many local residents could potentially save hundreds of pounds if they switched energy providers. It was agreed that the information should be posted on the website.

Recycling Centres: BMW circulated information regarding changes that would come into effect on the 3rd October 2016 at local recycling sites. The changes, which were intended to make the sites safer and more efficient, would place restrictions on larger vehicles using the sites.

Council Tax Rebate Scheme: BMW circulated details of the consultation process currently being carried out by West Somerset Council regarding the Council Tax Rebate Scheme for 2017/18.

RB asked BMW if she was able to provide some background to the information circulated by Bruce Lang (Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer) of West Somerset District Council. The information circulated by Mr Lang sought to clarify statements made by MP Ian Liddel-Grainger, and quoted in the local press, concerning the possible merger of local Councils. BMW advised that the information in the press did not accurately reflect the situation. BMW stated that discussions regarding the possible merger of a number of district councils in Somerset were continuing, however the full impact of any new arrangements were not yet known.

Door to door salesmen: BMW reported that Carhampton had experienced problems with people going from door to door trying to sell goods. She advised that the approach used by these people was often unpleasant and aggressive and that anyone experiencing similar problems should contact the local police.

The Chairman thanked BMW for her input to the meeting.

5. Somerset County Councillor Report

Titholes Orchard: CL stated her concern that the Titholes Orchard site was currently being offered for sale by the Crown Estate and that this may lead to changes in the plans for the site. SC stated that his understanding was that the intention of the Crown Estate had always been to sell the site with obligations being placed on the purchasers to deliver the proposed play area and car park. RB advised that no reference is made in the sales information to the play area or the car park. It was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to write to Lucy Back at Savills and ask for assurance that the current legal agreement between the Parish Council and the Crown Estate will not be put at risk by the sale of the site. It was further agreed that clarification be sought regarding the status of the current planning condition imposed on the site and information regarding timescales for its development.

Speed Restrictions – Carhampton: CL asked for the views of those present on the current speed limits which are in force on the A39 as you approach Carhampton from Williton. The consensus was that the present arrangements were satisfactory.

Carhampton Youth Club: CL reported that the Youth Club in Carhampton had recently been awarded a grant of £2,500.

Somerset Road Casualties: CL reported that during the period January to March 2016, approximately £23 million was spent as a result of road accidents.

Councillors advised CL that the A39 near Bilbrook was dangerous and, in the opinion of many of those present, the situation had been exacerbated by the state of the road surface. SC advised that a certain section of the road was resurfaced approximately two years ago and since that time the number of problems had increased.

The Chairman thanked CL for her input to the meeting.

6. Members of the Public

There were no members of the public in attendance.
The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions before declaring the Public Open Session closed.

The Public Open Session ended at 8.05 pm.

Chairman

_____ Date

DRAFT