

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SESSION ON THE 5TH DECEMBER 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 December 2016.
2. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 p.m. She welcomed those in attendance who included Mr Ken Marshall from Somerset County Council and members of the public.

3. **Flooding Issues**

Ken Marshall (KM), Service Manager for the Highways Service Structures Maintenance Team (S.C.C.) provided an update on plans to repair the damaged culvert outside Court Place Farm in Withycombe. KM confirmed that the problem with the culvert had been identified more than eighteen months ago but constraints on resources meant that work of this nature had to be undertaken according to priority and that this had delayed the repair. KM advised that the works package had now gone to the contractor and that work was due to start on site on the 9th January 2017. The work would involve clearing and repairing the culvert, possibly changing the chamber cover (for safety reasons). Other work such as de-silting may well be undertaken if identified and deemed necessary when the repair work got underway. The time to complete the project was estimated to be four to five weeks. KM advised that the key risks to the project which may delay the start date, were weather, other contractual commitments and unforeseen emergencies elsewhere.

SC advised KM that there were other problems with the watercourse further upstream. KM agreed to look at these issues before the end of December to see if these could be incorporated into the current work programme. SC offered to advise KM of the particular problem areas.

KM answered a number of detailed questions from both Councillors and members of the public. The Chairman and Councillors thanked KM for attending the meeting and providing such helpful information on the problems associated with the culvert.

The Chairman invited Mike and Maggie Rutty (MR) of Mill Stream Cottage to speak about recent flooding problems that they had experienced. MR advised that they had lived at the cottage for a number of years with no significant flooding problems; however in 2016 they had suffered problems on two separate occasions. Flood water had not got into the dwelling but there was significant flooding outside of the property. MR advised that major problems are caused by the build-up of debris in the watercourse. MR asked if more could be done to keep drains and watercourses clear of debris. BMW advised that it was unlikely that the County or District Council's would be able to do more, due to financial constraints.

The Chairman suggested that 'self-help' might be the best way forward and if enough volunteers could be found from amongst local residents, all drains and watercourses could be kept clear. BMW advised that other parishes that had developed flood plans had, as part of these plans, formed groups of volunteer flood wardens. These flood wardens would address problems such as blocked drains etc. during periods of bad weather.

It was agreed that efforts would be made to organise a group of local volunteers to help clear drains and watercourses. The Chairman agreed that the Parish Council would take steps to organise and coordinate local people who might be prepared to help. Helen Hughes (member

of the public) suggested that similar efforts could be made to clear litter which was becoming a problem in certain parts of the parish.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their constructive comments and their contributions to the debate on the issue of flooding.

4. Parish Paths Liaison Officer (PPLO)

Paul Bryant, a local resident, was present at the meeting and expressed an interest in carrying out the role of PPLO for the parish. The Chairman and Clerk outlined the key aspects of the role and suggested that Paul speak to Chris Adams, who had undertaken the role for a number of years, to seek further information. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact Chris to see if he would be prepared to discuss the role with Paul. The Clerk was also instructed to obtain the appropriate forms etc. to enable Paul to be formally appointed to the role. Parish Councillors thanked Paul for volunteering his assistance.

5. Large Vehicle Incident – October 2016

The Chairman invited Helen Hughes to speak regarding an incident which occurred in October 2016 when a large vehicle caused problems when travelling through the village. Helen provided a verbal explanation of the problem; written correspondence had been received from Helen and circulated to Councillors soon after the event. Councillors expressed their sympathy with Helen regarding the issue and the Clerk explained that the Parish Council had done everything that it was empowered to do, in order to try and resolve the issue. Unfortunately, it was felt that the only thing that could be done was, in the event of a future incident, to take photographic evidence and report the matter to the police. SC suggested that any photographic evidence should include an image of the plate on the back of the cab of the lorry which gives the specification of the vehicle.

6. Somerset County Councillor Report

CL had tendered her apologies.

7. District Councillor Report

Flooding: BMW advised that recent problems with flooding may have been reduced if a flood plan was put in place. She suggested that, at the very least, work should be done to identify the problem / high risk areas within the parish. BMW advised that if problems were identified there were often things that could be done to mitigate these problems and, in some cases, funding may be available to support necessary actions.

Closure of stroke beds – Williton Hospital: BMW urged everyone to sign the petition in support of reinstating the current level of stroke beds at Williton Hospital. BMW advised that the Clinical Commissioning Group were proposing to close six of the twelve stroke beds at the hospital. This could result in local people having to be treated at South Petherton Hospital. The Clerk reported that he had sent an email to Williton Parish Council who were meeting with Nick Broughton, Chief Executive of Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The email expressed Withycombe Parish Council's vehement opposition to any diminution of services at Williton Hospital. Parish Councillors reiterated the view that that they were opposed to any reduction in services provided at Williton Hospital.

Waste Partnership: BMW circulated information regarding waste collection services over the Christmas period. She also advised that a new service would soon be introduced to enable waste paint to be recycled.

West Somerset Council Customer Services Centre- Minehead: BMW advised that the Customer Service Centre in Summerland Road, Minehead had now been closed. In future a limited service would be provided from Minehead Library.

Transformation / Merger of District Authorities: BMW advised that a consultation process will be undertaken during December 2016 and January 2017 which will inform the decision making process.

The Chairman thanked BMW for her input to the meeting

8. Members of the Public

Members of the public in attendance had contributed to a number of topics discussed earlier in the meeting, there were no further matters raised.

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