

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Monday 23rd May 2022 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: Steven Hansford (Chairman), Claire Huish, Stephen Crossman, Richard Barnham, Chris Thomas

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk), Cllr C Lawrence (SCC), Cllr M Kravis (SW&T)
Approximately 20 members of the public were present.

PUBLIC FORUM

Members of the public were in attendance. Questions were raised regarding progress of the childrens play area. There were concerns from the public in attendance that nothing appeared to be happening and were seeking assurance from the parish council that they were committed to making the childrens play area a reality. It was felt that the site had the potential to be an important community space for the whole village. Cllr Crossman welcomed the enthusiasm however, there were 2 Cllr vacancies on the parish council and that by having these filled there would be more chance of the project moving forward.

Cllr Hansford suggested informal meetings with the working group inbetween parish council meetings.

The Chairman agreed that Cllr Kravis and Cllr Lawrence provide their reports in the public forum section of the meeting as Cllr Kravis needed to attend another engagement.

REPORT FROM SWT WARD CLLR M KRAVIS

Cllrs Kravis reported on current matters of interest including recent elections which took place on 5th May for the new Somerset Unitary Authority. New council housing in Minehead, off Seaward Way, ground clearance had commenced. Coastal Erosion along the Blue Anchor coast road; second phase of work to commence late in the summer. Storm damage repairs to Watchet Harbour.

REPORT FROM SCC WARD CLLR C LAWRENCE:

Cllr Lawrence thanked all the Parish Councillors for their work this year. She thanked all the villagers that have helped and supported the vulnerable that live in the village during the Covid Pandemic. Spring Booster Vaccinations are still available at Minehead Walk in Clinic. She congratulated the Parish Council on the new Car Park and said she had found it extremely useful when visiting the village. She suggested that the formation of a Task & Finish Group for the Play Area Project.

She also gave special thanks to Jean Humber for her work on Withycombe Wheels Community Car Scheme, who really do need more drivers.

The single Unitary Council for Somerset Authority will be coming into action during the next year and will be ready for Vesting day in April 2023.

2075 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr Hansford asked for nominations for Chair. Cllr Crossman proposed Cllr Hansford. Seconded by Cllr Thomas. There were no further nominations. Cllr Hansford was duly elected as Chairman for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Cllr Hansford signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk & Councillors.

2076 APOLOGIES

None

2077 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Cllr Hansford asked for nominations. Cllr Thomas said he wished to step down as Vice Chair. Cllr Crossman proposed Cllr Thrush. Cllr Thrush did not feel inclined to accept the nomination at this time. The Clerk advised that it was not a legal requirement to have a Vice Chair and it could be something that was re-visited in a few months time when the vacancies had been filled. In answer to a question she clarified that should the Chairman be absent from a meeting, any of the remaining Cllrs could be nominated to take the position of Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

2078 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS

Parish Council Meeting held on 7th March 2022. Proposed by Cllr Barnham and seconded by Cllr Hansford. The minutes, previously circulated, were agreed.

2079 PLANNING MATTERS

Applications received/approved:

Received: None

Decisions: None

2080 FINANCES

2055.1 Bank Reconciliation Statement – The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation up to 31st March 2022. The bank reconciliation agreed with bank statements and was signed by the Chairman, as an accurate record. Bank balances were:-

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|--------------------|------------|
| • Account 95304622 | £2,325.10 |
| • Account 44356501 | £28,791.10 |
| Total | £31,116.20 |

2081 PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL

The following accounts for payment were approved:

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|--|---------|
| 1. Zurich Insurance | £373.69 |
| 2. Clerks Salary & Expenses & Home Allowance | £941.91 |

It was noted that the Clerks payment included re-imbusement of payments to, P Lindstrand (grounds maintenance of Titholes area and adjoining footpath £120.00).

| | |
|---|----------|
| 3. SR & LE Crossman (installation of land drain at Play Area) | £1069.20 |
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The Clerk clarified that 5 quotations had been sought for the land drain installation. 4 contractors had not responded to enquiries; the cheapest quote had been selected. In response to a question, she confirmed that VAT would be recoverable.

Income received:

It was noted that the following income had been received:-

Parish Precept - £7997.30

Nat West compensation - £300.00

2082 TITHOLES ORCHARD UPDATE

Correspondence from Mr & Mrs Freegard – Cllr Hansford invited Mr Freegard to address the Committee. Mr Freegard expressed concern that the barbed wire running along the top of the fence adjacent to the play area had been removed without asking for permission. He had asked for this to be re-instated by the parish council in his email to the Chairman and Clerk. It had since been re-instated by Mr Freegard. The planning permission from 2003 had stated that there would be a beech hedge planted along the boundary. He welcomed alternative ideas if this was no longer to be the case.

Cllr Barnham said that once the play area was in situ that barbed wire could not remain in place because of the safety implications. Cllr Crossman suggested that an alternative solution would be a fence within a fence.

Report from Play Area Working Group – Kerrie Thorne reported on recent progress. A questionnaire had been sent to all residents in the parish. The response had been extremely positive with a great deal of support for the project and offers ranging from helping with maintenance, providing benches, picnic tables and help with further fund raising. A number of grant applications had also been submitted to Tesco Bags for Help, Wessex Water & Magna. It was agreed to that the Working Group and Parish Council would arrange an on-site meeting to scope out the positioning of the seating and picnic tables as soon as possible and to discuss the fencing and surfacing of the play area.

There was a discussion about the EarMarked Reserve (EMR) which currently stood just over £11,000 and that consideration be given to increasing the EMR from the General Reserves. If the Parish Council was in the position to match fund, this would open up further funding streams. Cllr Lawrence suggested contacting Justin Sargeant of SCF. Cllr Barnham clarified that the Parish Council was required to hold the General Reserve at approx the equivalent of the annual precept. The Clerk confirmed that as at 31 March 2022 general reserves stood at £17,234.

It was agreed to defer the decision on reserves until the next meeting and following the meeting with the Working Group

Action: Working Group and PC to meet week commencing 30th May, 2022

2083 BEECH TREES

Cllr Hansford had met with a contractor. The Clerk was awaiting the quote. Cllr Hansford had offered to make 2 replacement seats.

2084 CASUAL VACANCIES

The Clerk explained that following the elections there were 2 vacant seats. Co-options could be carried out at the next meeting.

2085 BANK SIGNATORY AND ONLINE BANKING

Nat West had confirmed that Cllr Hansford was now an authorised signatory for the account. Compensation of £300 had been received from Nat West as an apology for taking so long. The Clerk had submitted an application for on-line banking.

2086 HIGHWAY UPDATES

The update from Traffic Management concerning 40mph speed limit along Bilbrook Straight A39 was noted. An issue was raised concerning Coombe Lane. This had been closed off by Highways because of damaged overhead lines and residents had been cut off.

Councillor Barnham raised the issue of the damaged walls on Lower Street. This had been outstanding for around 3 years. Clerk to contact Bridges Department, SCC.

2087 CLERKS POST

The Clerk reported that with regret she would be resigning her post. It was agreed that the Clerk make the necessary arrangements for filling the vacancy.

2088 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

A meeting was agreed for 20th June to sign off the Annual Accounts 2021/22.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____