

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Monday 7th November 2022 at 7.00pm

These Minutes are DRAFT until approval at the next Full Council meeting.

PRESENT

Councillors: Kerrie Thorne, Chris Thomas, Stephen Crossman, Richard Barnham, Paul Wintermantle, Rob Hall

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk)
4 Members of the Public

PUBLIC FORUM

Members of the public conveyed their thanks to the playground working group and parish council for the hard work to deliver the play area. A member of the public said that they were appalled by recent negative comments on the facebook page directed at the Chair and Parish Council.

Concerns over the bus shelter at Rodhuish. This was now in quite a bad state of repair and a resident has been storing logs in it. There are currently at least 4 children waiting for the school bus without any shelter. Also, the ash trees at the parking area opposite Park Cottages had ash dieback and needed attention. Cllr Barnham said that he would go and have a look, Cllr Crossman recommended that the trees are reported on the Somerset County Council website page [Report a problem on the road \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/report-a-problem-on-the-road).

The bench at the Fire Beacon on Withycombe Hill was reported to be in disrepair. Cllr Crossman responded that Steven Hansford would be replacing the bench on his next visit. Cllr Thorne said she would contact him. There was discussion relating to the replacement guards of the trees. Cllr Crossman reported that they were scheduled to be replaced.

The Chair thanked members of the public for their contributions.

The public open session closed at 7.12pm

2142 APOLOGIES

Cllr Huish, Cllr Lawrence (SCC), Cllr Kravis (SW&T), Cllr Griffiths (SW&T)

2143 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

2144 MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 25th JULY 2022 & 5th SEPTEMBER 2022

Minutes of meetings held on 25th July 2022 and 5th September 2022 having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record.

2145 PARISH COUNCIL VACANCIES & CO-OPTION

Proposed by Cllr Barnham, seconded by Cllr Crossman, Paul Wintermantle was duly co-opted. Proposed by Cllr Crossman, seconded by Cllr Thorne, Rob Hall was duly co-opted. Acceptance of office forms were signed by both Councillors.

2146 REPORTS FROM COUNTY & DISTRICT CLLRS

No reports available at time of meeting.

2147 FINANCES

2147.1 **Bank Reconciliation to 1st November 2022** – The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation up to 1st November 2022. The bank reconciliation agreed with bank statements and was signed by the Chairman, as an accurate record. Bank balances were:-

• Account 95304622	£10,551.15
• Account 44356501	£21,623.42
Total	£32,174.57

2147.2 **Budget Monitoring to 1st November 2022** – The report previously circulated was **NOTED**. The Clerk confirmed that once the final invoices were received for the play area she would submit a VAT reclaim. The end of year budget forecast was on target.

2147.3 **Income received was noted:-**

Cash donation received for play area at 5th September 2022 meeting - £30.00

2147.4 **The following payments that had already been made were ratified:-**

1. 19th October 2022 – Sloane & Sons (2 benches)	£648.00
2. 24 th October 2022 – Darrens Den (final payment for fencing)	£1,600.00
3. 24 th October 2022 – Somerset Association of Local Councils	£76.86

Cllr Barnham confirmed that the Memorial Hall would make a contribution towards the 2nd bench and that they would be supplying two picnic benches. The picnic benches would remain the property of Withycombe Memorial Hall.

2147.5 **The following payments were approved for payment:-**

1. Engraving Studios Ltd (Memorial Plaque for bench)	£15.95
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2148 GARLANDS, CARHAMPTON S106 MONIES

Following advice from the Somerset West & Taunton S106 Officer, the Clerk had contacted Carhampton Parish Council in reference to the funds available. Carhampton confirmed that the funds had been earmarked for new play equipment in the recreation ground.

2149 VILLAGE ENTRY SPEED SIGNS

Councillors spoke at length concerning the different options. Cllr Barnham reminded the Committee that the issue had been discussed some 7 years ago and it had been decided not to pursue the matter. Cllr Wintermantle said he would prefer to see a 20mph limit through the village. Cllr Crossman agreed that road safety was important but had concerns with installing signage that would not accomplish the desired effect.

Action: Clerk to research sign options

2150 CARPARK ENTRANCE – WALL SAFETY

The Clerk said that she had checked the lease drawing and it would appear that the wall was the responsibility of the Parish Council. The owners of the adjacent property had raised concerns in respect of its state of repair.

Action: Cllr Thorne and Clerk will research quotes for the work.

2151 PLAY AREA STEPS

It had been reported that the timber edge of the steps is bowing out and is unsafe. Cllr Barnham had obtained one quote of £350 based on renewing the front boards. Other

options were discussed including concrete. Cllr Crossman said he would be happy to liaise on the timber needed for the renewal of the front boards. In the meantime the steps would be taped off. **Action: Cllr Crossman to progress**

2152 DISABLED ACCESS RAMP

Cllr Thorne explained that the chunky gravel currently on the ramp area renders it impossible to use for wheelchair users or Mums with buggys and prams. Likewise, the pathway behind the logs is almost impossible to push a pushchair/buggy across. Various alternatives were discussed.

Action: Cllr Crossman will trial some alternative materials and report back.

2153 COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD/SIGNAGE

Cllr Thorne explained that a community noticeboard had been one of the original ideas discussed by the 'Playground Mums'. There were noticeboards in the village however, these were locked. She had researched a design and quote which had been circulated to Councillors. She asked the committee to consider the principle of the idea for a time in the future. Councillors agreed with the principle of a community noticeboard but not to proceed at the current time.

2154 COMMUNITY BENCH

Materials will be £2K. There are still some funding bids to come in so Councillors agreed to defer a decision until the outcome on the outstanding funding bids were known.

2155 DOG WASTE BINS UPDATE

The dog waste bin for the play/amenity area needed to be progressed. Cllr Thorne reported that she enquired with the MHPF agent with regard to the land ownership in Combe Lane and permission to site a bin in this location. This was still unclear and it was suggested that enquiries be made with Somerset Highways with regard to the permissions.

Action: Clerk to order dog waste bin for Play/Amenity Area and contact SCC Highways.

2156 TREE/HEDGE PLANTING

Tree packs from Woodland Trust are due for delivery in November. The areas for planting were discussed. It was suggested the planting of a low level native hedge between the car park and lower level of the amenity area and a screening to the short edge of the play area. There was a suggestion from the floor of planting on top of the gabions at the entrance of the car park. Clearance of the brambles in this area was also mentioned.

Action: Working party to be formed once trees have arrived.

2157 COMMUNICATION WITH PARISHIONERS

Parish Magazine – The Clerk had received communication from the PCC Secretary regarding the church magazine and its possible use as a combined parish magazine. It was suggested that donations would need to be made to cover the additional costs of printing a larger magazine. Cllr Barnham said that he had also spoken to the PCC Secretary and confirmed that the PCC had not defined the amount of a contribution. Councillors were in agreement that a donation should be made and would welcome a suggestion as to the amount from the PCC.

Action: Clerk to contact PCC Secretary and bring back the suggested donation amount to the next Council meeting for agreement.

Withycombe & Rodhuish Community FB Page – Cllr Thorne reported that although FB had been useful for updating parishioners she had been subject to bullying and intimidation through the FB page following an update she posted regarding the play area. Cllr Thorne said it is easy for information to be misinterpreted and taken out of context. Cllr Barnham suggested that FB was no longer used for Parish Council business. Cllr Thorne agreed and suggested a return to just using the website for this purpose. Cllr Thorne raised the matter of recent internal emails that had been circulated to Councillors, one of these being a quote for works. She had expected that internal emails concerning parish council business would

be kept confidential and had been disappointed that the detail of the emails had been discussed at a village social event.

Proposed by Cllr Barnham, seconded by Cllr Wintermantle that the Parish Council would not use social media platforms for Parish Council business and that internal emails concerning Parish Council business are to be kept confidential. Unanimously **AGREED**

2158 FUNDING UPDATE

Cllr Thorne reported that the Tesco Bags for Help fund was live at Tescos Minehead and would run until the end of January. There was still no news on the Magna grant. Cllr Thorne was trying to make contact with the community involvement officer.

2159 PLAY AREA/AMENITY UPDATE

The wet weather and mud has slowed up installation. Weather dependant it is hoped that installation will be complete in about 10 days. The installer has recommended that the area is kept closed until grass seed has been sown and the ground has a chance to settle. In any case RoSPA will be required to sign off the play area before it can be used. The installer will arrange this. It is hoped to organise an official open day in the future.

2160 PLAYGROUND MUMS UPDATE

The group continue to meet with a focus on planning and organising social events for the village.

2161 CLERK VACANCY UPDATE

The Clerk reported that the interested party had withdrawn their application as there was concern over the requirements of the role and whether this was achievable within the contractual hours. The Clerk advised that Councillors may wish to consider the contractual hours for the post in view of the difficulty in filling the vacancy. She said that with the forthcoming Unitary Authority and the shift to bi-monthly meetings there was more obligations attached to the role then there had been in the past. She had contacted Clerks in 2 similar sized Parish Councils in West Somerset and they were contracted 8 - 10 hours per week. Cllr Crossman asked whether Ms Rawle would re-consider staying in the role if the hours were reviewed. Ms Rawle confirmed she would be happy to remain in the role on adjusted terms.

2162 REVIEW OF CLERKS HOURS AND SALARY

Clerks Contractual Hours – Further to the discussion covered in minute 2163 it was agreed to increase the contractual hours for the Clerk/RFO role to 8 hours a week from the 1st November 2022. Proposed by Cllr Crossman, seconded Cllr Thomas and unanimously **AGREED**.

Action: Clerk to prepare revised contract on new terms.

National Joint Council Pay Award – The Clerk reported that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services had reached an agreement on new pay scales for 2022-23 to be retrospectively implemented from 1st April 2022. It was agreed that the new pay scales be implemented from 1st April 2022 and that the Clerk be placed on point 12 with an hourly rate of £12.73. Proposed by Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Thorne and unanimously **AGREED**.

2163 AGREE MEETING DATES FOR 2023

The proposed dates for meetings in 2023, having been previously circulated, were agreed as follows:-

9th January, 6th March, 12th April (Annual Parish Assembly), 15th May, 3rd July, 4th September, 6th November

2164 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Agree budget and precept, Newsletter contribution, Play Area/Amenity Area Updates

2165 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday 9th January 2023

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____

DRAFT