

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Monday 3rd July 2023 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: Kerrie Thorne (Chairman), Claire Huish, Paul Wintermantle, Richard Barnham, Robert Hall, Chris Thomas, Steve Crossman

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk), 4 members of the public

PUBLIC FORUM

A statement was read out by a member of the public concerning Item 5 on the agenda. A parishioner had lost out on a Magna house in Withycombe to someone outside of the parish because it did not have a local connection clause on the property. The parishioner lives with their husband and two children in a 2 bedroom bungalow which is unsuitable for their needs. There is strong feeling within the village that has led to a petition of 111 signatures and 49 letters of support. A request was put to Councillors to consider writing to the Council to request that a local connection clause is placed on Magna properties within the Parish as a matter of urgency. It was also requested that the Parish Council write to the Leader of the Council, relevant portfolio holders and the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair responded that she had contacted Magna and had found out that new build properties subject to S106 will have a local connection tie but the older properties do not have this tie. The Homefinder policy is due for an annual review and the Chair said that she had emailed the Homefinder Co-ordinator at Somerset Council to request that local connection was made stronger in the policy as part of the review. As the Homefinder policy is county wide this would have to be applied for the whole of Somerset and not just the smaller settlements such as Withycombe.

2223 APOLOGIES

Cllr Huish

2224 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON ANY AGENDA ITEM

No declarations of interests from Councillors present at the meeting.

2225 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 15th MAY 2023

Cllr Thorne asked that minute 2219 to include the results of the play area consultation. Cllr Wintermantle asked for correction of spelling of his surname. The minutes were agreed subject to the amendment of minute 2219 and the spelling correction.

2226 REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Waste Services – There will be a strike Wednesday – Friday 12th July. Collections will be re-scheduled.

Road Repairs – An additional £5.4M has been awarded from Government to carry out essential repairs across the County. Surface dressing of the roads has started as part of the summer maintenance programme. You can check which roads are being surface dressed here: www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/surface-dressing/

If you need to report an overgrown verge, pothole or more, you can do so here: www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/

You can get dates of planned works here: www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/roadworks-and-travel/, and make sure to follow Travel Somerset on Twitter and Facebook.

Libraries – Customers who need in-person help or advice from Somerset Council will find support at every Somerset Library from July. Staff in libraries are trained to provide digital support to help customers self-serve when needed. They will also be able to set up virtual, face-to-face meetings on the spot so people can speak directly to a member of the Customers Service team.

There will be a Summer Reading Challenge at Somerset Council's Libraries. Visit www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries/our-libraries/

LCN – The first LCN will be held on 13th July at Crowcombe Village Hall.

2227 HOUSING – REMOVAL OF LOCAL CONNECTION CLAUSE

The issue was discussed at length by Councillors and the points that had been raised in the Public Open Session were considered. Councillors felt strongly that all Magna properties within the parish should have a local connection tie and that the current policy did not work because of the lack of housing in smaller rural communities such as Withycombe. It was felt that the policy was unfair and that people local to the parish were finding it impossible to remain in the village and were forced to move away from family and friends. Clarity was needed on the definition of 'local' in the context of the Homefinder policy and assurance that the policy was being used consistently

It was proposed by Cllr Thorne, seconded by Councillor Thomas and unanimously agreed that the Parish Council write to Magna Housing Association requesting that consideration be given to applying a local connection clause linked to those living in the Parish, be added to all Magna properties in Withycombe as a matter of urgency.

2228 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Rodhuish bus stop – The Clerk has spoken to School Transport who will liaise with the bus driver.

Additional Signage Blindwell Lane – The Clerk has requested that additional signage be put in place to direct artic lorries straight on to Felons Oak.

2229 FINANCES

2229.1 Bank Reconciliation Statement – The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation up to 30th June 2023.. The bank reconciliation agreed with bank statements and was signed by the Chairman, as an accurate record. Bank balances were:-

• Account 95304622	£1,102.38
• Account 44356501	£25,746.92
Total	£26,849.30

2229.2 Budget Monitoring – The Clerk outlined the reserves position. Play/Community Area - £7044. Asset Maintenance - £3,000. General Reserves - £16,753. Cllr Barnham remarked that the Parish Council was still holding a substantial amount in general reserves. The Clerk said that this reflected the recent income from the precept and that this would reduce during the year as payments were made from the general fund. A discussion was had regarding the £52 held by the Parish Council on behalf of Active Living. This had been identified in the Internal audit report. Cllr Barnham would speak to the organiser and report back at the next meeting. A discussion was held in respect of the play area reserve and possible ideas for future enhancements. The Clerk said that she had received an email from a company

regarding EV charging points, she would follow this up. Cllr Thorne mentioned bike racks as a possible investment to the area.

2230 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The internal audit report was discussed by Councillors. Areas that the auditor had highlighted in his report covered the ear-marked reserve for the former Active Living Project and risk management for the play area and open space. As discussed in minute 2229 Cllr Barnham would investigate the small amount that was earmarked for Active Living. The Clerk was asked to carry out the necessary risk assessment on the play area as soon as possible. The Clerk would also confirm with the Council's insurers that the level of cover was adequate for the play area, open space and car park.

2231 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE RETURN 2022-23

2231.1 **Annual Governance Statement 2022-23:** – The Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2023, was circulated by the Clerk. After due consideration, The Annual Governance Statement was approved by Council and signed by the Chairman.

2231.2 **Accounting Statements 2022-23:** - The Accounting Statements which forms part of the Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2023, was circulated by the Clerk. A question was raised about the fixed assets figure. The Clerk explained that the asset register valuation was based on purchase price and not a depreciating sum. She would send out the guidance to explain this. The Accounting Statement was approved by Council and signed by the Chairman.

2232 TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The following payments were approved:-

1. SRawle (Clerks net salary+expenses) April-June	£1132.80
2. HMRC tax on Clerks salary	£267.33
3. A Giles (Internal Audit)	£111.00

Proposed by Cllr Barnham, seconded by Cllr Hall and unanimously agreed that the accounts for payment be approved.

To ratify the following urgent payments already made:-

1. Darrens Den (retention payment for play area)	£2,000.00
2. Darrens Den (additional rubber matting)	£260.00
3. P Lindstrand (grounds maintenance)	£150.00
4. All Out Play (Sensory board&noughts&crosses)	£1407.72

Income received:

It was noted that the following income had been received:-
CAF Donation - £100.00

2233 PARISH AREA/COMMUNITY AREA UPDATE

Cllr Thorne extended her thanks to councillors and everyone in the community who had helped with the play area project. The sensory panels and the noughts and crosses were in place kindly provided by Magna Housing community fund. The wildflower meadow area had unfortunately not taken and another attempt will be made in the autumn. A question was asked about the plastic tree guards in Moira's Wood. Cllr Crossman clarified that these

would degrade naturally. Cllr Crossman thanked Cllr Thorne and the Playground Mums for their hard work and commitment in delivering the play area for the parish.

2234 CLOSURE OF POP-UP POST OFFICE CARHAMPTON

Following the recent loss of the post office service in Carhampton, Lydeard St Lawrence, Exford and Winsford the Clerk had received communication from Carhampton Recreation Centre Committee. A petition had been organised and the neighbouring parishes of Withycombe and Old Cleeve were being invited to organise their own petition. Letters have been written to the CEO of the Post Office and MP Ian Liddell-Grainger. A petition for signature had been situated in the lobby of the Memorial Hall.

2235 FORTHCOMING LCN MEETING

This will be on the 13th July at Crowcombe Village Hall. Cllr Hall will attend on behalf of the Council. Cllr Hall asked whether attendance could be on a rotational basis with other Councillors. Cllr Barnham said that he would have more availability soon and offered to be a second representative. The Clerk will send out the paperwork to Cllr Barnham. Cllr Thorne was attending a pre-meeting with Carhampton and Old Cleeve Parish Councils to discuss common issues of concern between the 3 parishes.

2236 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Parking Rodhuish.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Next meeting 11th September

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____