

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Monday 8th January 2024 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

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

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk), Cllr M Kravis (SC) 2 member of the public

PUBLIC FORUM

There were no questions or issues raised by members of the public. The Chair closed the public forum and declared the meeting open.

2272 APOLOGIES

Cllr Christine Lawrence (SC)

2273 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON ANY AGENDA ITEM

None declared on any of the agenda items

2274 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 11th September & 6th November 2023

The minutes were approved.

2275 UPDATES/ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

2276 REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

Cllr Kravis gave his report:

Budget 2024-25 - Executive will meet on 15th January to discuss 2024-25 budget and options to bridge the £100m budget gap. Approach will be to bridge the gap with use of reserves, significant savings, increased council tax and selling of assets. Options to be considered will be reducing or stopping discretionary services which might include stopping CCTV, closure of toilets, theatres, leisure centres and 5 re-cycling sites. Discussions will be held with parish and town councils around options for devolving rather than stopping services. Have requested that Government look at the funding model for local government as it is broken and many Councils are finding themselves in a similar position. The current £100m budget gap is forecast to get bigger year on year.

Dunster Cycle Path – The Dunster-Carhampton-Blue Anchor phase is going ahead.

Blue Anchor – 20mph speed limit to be introduced.

Cllr Kravis asked if the parish council had been able to progress the highway issues at Combe Lane and Buckhill. Cllr Barnham reported that he had met with Highways at the beginning of December to discuss the issues. SC are unable to carry out works at Combe

Lane, will need to budget for it next year. Magna have been alerted to the works required to the bank on their side of the stream so that the road can be repaired. There is still a problem with the gullies in the middle of the the village with regard to ownership and responsibility. Cllr Barnham had made a request that the gullies are cleared at Rodhuish. Cllr Hall commented that he had seen the gully clearing vehicle but after a brief inspection they had driven off.

2277 FLOODING/EMERGENCY PLANNING

Letters had been written to Dunster Estate and Hodgetts Farming in November; responses had been received. Clerk would circulate the responses received. Cllr Barnham asked that any comments be forwarded to him and he would draft a response. A new sustainable farming incentive would encourage uncultivated headland margins. It was reported that the the water in Combe Lane was now flowing freely in the watercourse.

Highways Meeting – Cllr Barnham will send an email to the Highways Manager for an update on issues raised at the December meeting.

West Somerset Flood Group – Cllr Barnham was planning to attend the meeting on 24th January.

Flood Plan – Clerk would circulate the existing flood plan which required updating. Many of the contacts on the original plan had now left the parish and new volunteers would be required. Cllr Thomas said that Sampford Brett had there own flood prevention team within the parish.

2278 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE MINEHEAD & WATCHET LCN MEETING HELD ON 5th DECEMBER AT WILLITON

Minutes had been circulated by the Clerk. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 7 February 2024 commencing at 6.30pm. Venue: West Somerset House, Williton.

2279 SOMERSET COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION

The budget consultation was noted. Closing date 22nd January 2024.

2280 PLANNING

Applications received: 3/41/23/001, Charem, West Street, Withycombe – Outline application with all matters reserved for replacement of dwelling.
The Committee did not have any formal observations to make at this stage.

2281 FINANCES

2281.1 **Bank Reconciliation Statement** – The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation up to 31st December 2023. There was discussion regarding the monthly income from CAF Bank. The Clerk said she thought the originator was St Nicholas Church. Cllr Barnham would make some enquiries with the Treasurer.

The bank reconciliation agreed with bank statements and was signed by the Chairman, as an accurate record. Bank balances were:-

- Account 95304622 £877.40
- Account 44356501 £22,956.89
- Total £23,834.29

2281.2 **Budget Monitoring** – The budget monitoring report was noted along. The Clerk outlined the reserves position.

General Reserves - £13,430

Play/Community Area – £7,352

Asset Maintenance/Replacement – £3,000

Active Living - £52.00

The reserves position was noted.

2282 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS PAY AWARD 2023

Proposed by Cllr Crossman, seconded by Cllr Thomas to implement the revised pay scales effective from 1st April 2023.

2283 TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

2283.1 **The following payments were approved:-**

1.	ISOK Design – website hosting and domain name.	£122.35
2.	British Heart Foundation – defibrillator replacement pads	£84.00
3.	Clerks Salary & Expenses (Oct-Dec)	£1,730.43

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

2245.2 **To ratify the following urgent payments already made:-**

1.	Id Verde – 2023-24 dog bin collection	£149.76
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The Clerk confirmed the payment was in respect of the annual SLA and would cover the period up to January 2025.

The urgent payment was agreed.

Income received:

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

CAF Donation - £100.00

Cllr Barnham to make enquiries whether the donation was being made by the Church.

2284 BUDGET/PRECEPT 2024-25

The Clerk had circulated documents prior to the meeting including a draft budget.

Councillors discussed at length the financial requirement of the parish council for the forthcoming financial year and considered the impact of Somerset Councils financial crisis on local service provision.

Proposed by Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Crossman and unanimously agreed to ask for a precept of £8,500 for the 2024/25 financial year and that the draft budget be adjusted accordingly.

It was felt that it would be prudent to retain sufficient earmarked reserves to cover any service reductions from the higher authority together with ensuring the maintenance and replacement of existing assets such as play equipment and bus shelters. After discussion a proposal was put forward by Cllr Crossman that some of the general reserves should be re-allocated to ear-marked reserves.

Proposed by Cllr Crossman, seconded by Cllr Wintermantle and unanimously agreed that £3,000 be shifted from the general reserves and re-allocated equally between the play area earmarked reserves and asset maintenance earmarked reserves.

2285 PLAY AREA/COMMUNITY AREA UPDATES

Cllr Huish reported water pooling at the bottom of the slide. Clerk to contact Darren Den's to see if anything could be done.

2286 HIGHWAYS UPDATES

Salt Bin – Details had already been circulated by the Clerk regarding the damaged salt bin in West Street. Proposed by Cllr Crossman, seconded by Cllr Thomas, unanimously agreed to proceed with purchase of new salt bin.

Rodhuish sign – no progress.

Clerk updated Cllrs on road closure notices received from Somerset Council.

2287 PARISH ASSETS

Withycombe Hill Trees - Cllr Crossman had replaced 4 or 5 of the old guards and removed others where the trees should now be substantial enough to forego protection. Only action now was to clear the brambles and gorse. No further action required.

Benches – 2 benches for the hill were in Cllr Crossmans yard. A quote had been received for installation for £240.00. Proposed by Cllr Crossman, seconded by Cllr Barnham and unanimously agreed to accept the quote and proceed with installation of the benches.

Combe Lane – After discussion it was agreed to take on the memorial bench as a parish asset. Proposed by Cllr Barnham, seconded by Cllr Wintermantle and unanimously agreed. The possible purchasing of a bench for Rodhuish was discussed. Felons Oak corner was suggested as a possible site. No decision was made. Defer to future meeting.

2288 PARISH NEWSLETTER

Cllr Barnham said that he had spoke with a parishioner who may be interested in editing a newsletter for the parish. He will keep Cllrs updated.

Defer to future meeting.

2289 COUNCILLOR VACANCY

The vacancy was noted. Cllrs will continue to spread the word.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Next meeting 4th March

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____