

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SESSION ON THE 19th MAY 2025 IN THE MEMORIAL HALL, WITHYCOMBE AT 7PM

DRAFT NOTES

PRESENT

Councillors: Richard Barnham (Chairman), Clare Huish, Paul Thomas, Paul Wintermantle, Claire Tydeman

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk)

PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman opened the public forum at 7.00pm and welcomed those in attendance. Apologies had been received from Richard Devitt, St Bartholomew Church, Cllrs Hall and Crossman.

Somerset Council

Cllr Marcus Kravis provided a report from Somerset Council. Bridgwater Dock was undergoing investment and regeneration as part of the modernisation of Bridgwater town centre. County Hall C block is to be sold to a developer for key worker housing. Yeovil is part of a new regeneration project for the town centre and Chard Reservoir is undergoing improvements in relation to flood resilience. Work is ongoing to improve bus links to Bridgwater.

Balancing budgets in key services of adult social care and childrens care is still a challenge. Many parish councils have taken on additional services hence the higher precepts at town and parish council tier. A new structure is in place from the 1st April, there have been significant redundancies that have affected services such as highways and education

A member of the public raised a question about the understaffing of the SEN team. Children from West Somerset were being offered placements in North Molton as the only option. Cllr Kravis said he would look into this and provide a response. Cllr Barnham raised the issue of communication with Somerset Council. He had emailed the bridges department on several occasions of late and had failed to receive a reply.

Cllr Barnham thanked Cllr Kravis for his reply and his regular attendance at parish council meetings in the last year.

Withycombe Memorial Hall

Cllr Barnham updated the public forum on the agreement by the parish council to award the Memorial Hall grant of £2.5k to help with operational costs and help the hall to continue to function as a facility for the local community. The Memorial Hall had been awarded a Covid grant in 2020 which had helped in recent years, but this had now been exhausted. He said that the hall had lots of facilities that were not been used. He said that the hall committee try to put on events but this all takes time and the events needed to be well supported. The events generate money for the hall and ideally the hall would like to be self funding.

Cllr Barnham asked the public forum if there were any suggestions for other events or uses for the hall; would residents like it to be used for other things. Any events would need to be driven by people; the Memorial Hall would back them and would be happy to help with the promotion.

Liz Steadman added that there was a full size billiard table, table tennis and short mat bowls. A member of the public asked about the use of the audio system. Cllr Barnham said that the hall had a good speaker system, screen and projector which could show films and DVDs.

Any ideas or suggestions please contact a member of the Memorial Hall committee.

Report from Chairman

Cllr Barnham updated on the road closure and road repair. This was almost complete, with some capping of the wall to finish off.

There was a lengthy debate concerning the travel of large vehicles through the village, how these are managed and flow of traffic through the village. Andrew Speed who farmed in the parish said that everyone, needed to work together to ensure the flow of traffic through the village. There was a voluntary one way system in place and this worked well and business and farms endeavoured to communicate with their suppliers about this. A suggestion was made that a widening of the road could be made possible if the bank opposite to the road repair was removed.

Cllr Barnham said that it was important that the streams and culverts were kept clear and debris free. Although, there was some issues with responsibility of some of the culverts that ran under the road, residents with any water courses crossing their properties were required to keep these clear of debris. If any residents were interested in volunteering to be flood wardens for the village, he said, that training could be provided. It was suggested that a leaflet drop with useful contacts and phone numbers in the event of a flood would be useful.

A query was raised about the frequency of road sweeping and drain clearing at Higher Rodhuish Road. It was mentioned that some years ago a village work party organised a sweep up of the Higher Rodhuish Rd – could this be organised again. Mr Speed said he was more than happy to help with heavy equipment if needed. There was a general discussion about the Highways service from Somerset Council and the reduced service following budget cuts and financial pressures. Other points raised concerned the bank collapsing from Buckhill bungalows to Parkway bungalow.

Speed restrictions – Many of the residents in attendance said they would like to see a speed limit in place, speed indicator device and please drive carefully signs at either end of the village. Because of the lack of pavements through the village, residents especially the elderly and those with young children felt vulnerable walking through the village.

A resident living at the Causeway reported that a brick had been thrown through her back window at 4pm one afternoon recently and that residents needed to be vigilant. It was suggested that residents check their security cameras.

There were no further questions or points raised. The Chairman thanked all for attending and contributing to the public forum.

The public forum closed at 8.25pm

_____ Chairman

_____ Date

DRAFT