

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on
Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: Richard Barnham (Chairman), Steve Crossman, Robert Hall, Paul Wintermantle, Claire Tydeman

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk)
Members of the Memorial Hall Committee

PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm. There were no members of the public present.

2381 APOLOGIES

Paul Thomas.

2382 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Barnham and Cllr Huish declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6, grant for the Memorial Hall.

2383 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 13th January 2025

The minutes previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record.

2384 UPDATES/MATTERS ARISING (not part of later agenda items)

There were no matters arising.

2385 REQUEST FOR GRANT FROM WITHYCOMBE MEMORIAL HALL

A request for financial assistance had been received by Withycombe Memorial Hall in a letter received on 10th December 2024.

Committee members from the WMH gave a report on the current financial state and the challenges involved in raising revenue through the various social activities to cover the rising costs. The costs incurred in maintaining the hall were now running at approximately £7000. The Parish Council heard that the memorial hall had received a Covid grant and this had been used for renewing assets within the hall i.e new boiler and new curtains; it was reported that the hall was in very good shape. The Committee had organised three well attended bingo nights during 2024 which had raised funds, however, it was not felt that these could be repeated because of the amount of organisation involved and the donations of prizes for the raffle. It was also becoming harder to not only encourage community participation in the social events but also to attract new committee members. Hirers for the hall had dwindled in the last few years and committee members were finding themselves in the position of organising events to raise funds. The major costs of running the hall were

water rates, electric and heating which amounted to approx. £600 per month. The Memorial Hall were asking for the Parish Council to consider a financial contribution for the forthcoming financial year.

An income and expenditure report for the period ending 31st December 2023 and current hall budget for year ending 2024 had been provided and was considered by Councillors.

Councillors discussed the request at length and were agreement that the memorial hall was a valuable asset to the community providing an important social meeting place. The Parish Council were custodian trustees of the memorial hall, so in event of the trustees not been able to continue the financial upkeep and running of the hall, the parish council would have to step in. The Clerk explained that the precept had already been set for the year and the Parish Council had set a budget in line with a zero % increase on the parish council element of the council tax. She explained that if Councillors decided to make a financial contribution towards the memorial hall this could be funded from general reserves for 25/26, however, Councillors would need to look at increasing the precept for the following year to bring the general reserves back on target.

Cllr Wintermantle said that the village hall was a valuable village asset and that his view was that the parish council should make a contribution.

Cllr Crossman suggested a financial contribution of £2,500; he said that Councillors would need to accept that the precept next year would need to be increased. Cllr Hall felt that the parish council had a duty to support the hall and that residents would support the decision once they knew what it was for.

Cllr Crossman proposed a donation of £2,500 be made to the WMH to cover financial assistance for the 25-26 financial year, with the payment being made after 1st April 2025. This was seconded by Cllr Wintermantle and agreed by Cllrs Tydeman and Hall. Abstentions were received from Cllrs Barnham and Huish.

2386 HIGHWAYS – HIGHER RODHUISH RD

Work would be commencing on 3rd March. A full road closure would be in place for 6 to 8 weeks. The contractor would be excavating the road before re-building the retaining wall. The parish council had asked for the bank to be re-built and this would be included in the works.

2387 ADOPTION OF NEW FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Cllrs Wintermantle, Tydeman and Barnham had met in January to go through the new document which had been published by the National Association of Local Councils. There had been some issues identified that required improvement relating to a Cllr other than the Chair to carry out bank reconciliations and a review of bank signatories. These were being dealt with later in the agenda.

It was agreed to adopt the latest version of the document. Proposed by Cllr Wintermantle, seconded by Cllr Tydeman and agreed by all.

2388 REVIEW OF BANK SIGNATORIES

It was agreed that Cllr Wintermantle would be an additional bank signatory on the bank account.

2389 QUARTERLY BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Cllr Tydeman agreed to take on the quarterly reconciliation checks.

2390 **FINANCES**

2390.1 **Bank Reconciliation Statement** – The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation up to 28th February 2025. Cllr Barnham has carried out the reconciliation of the cash book against the bank statements up to 31st December 2024.

The bank reconciliation agreed with bank balances up to 28th February 2025 and was signed by the Chairman, as an accurate record. Bank balances were:-

• Account 95304622	£2,815.04
• Account 44356501	£19,263.15
Total	£22,078.19

2390.2 **Budget Monitoring** – The income and expenditure against budget report was noted.

2391 **TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

The following accounts for payment were approved:-

1. Clerks salary & Expenses (Jan-Mar)	£1180.86
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The urgent payment that had already been made in respect the SLA dog bin collection was noted.

Proposed by Cllr Wintermantle, seconded by Cllr Tydeman and unanimously agreed that other accounts for payment be approved.

2392 **APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR 25/26**

It was agreed to appoint Mr Andrew Giles.

2393 **PLAY AREA/COMMUNITY AREA**

Darren would carry out the in-filling on the tower.

The pooling off water at the base of the slide was discussed. Darren had advised the angle of the slide could not be altered because of the rock base under the soil. There would be risk of damaging the slide if an attempt was made to adjust the height and angle. Clerk would ask play inspector if there he could suggest an alternative solutions that would work without compromising the safety standards of the equipment.

Cllr Wintermantle said that the noughts and crosses boards were in need of a wash; he volunteered to undertake this.

2394 **PARISH ASSEMBLY**

The format of the previous standalone meetings held in previous years was discussed. Last years meeting had not received any attendance from parishioners despite a door to door leaflet drop. As there were no local organisations that were parish specific it had become more challenging to find presenters that were of interest to the community. Cllr Crossman said that making more of the public open forums should there be something topical to discuss could be more productive in engaging the community. It was suggested that the Memorial Hall be invited to deliver a presentation following the decision to make a financial contribution towards running costs. It was agreed that the public open forum at the start of the May meeting would replace the Parish Assembly.

2395 **ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

Memorial Bench for former Cllr Chris Thomas
Approval of Final Accounts

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____