

WITHYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Withycombe Parish Council meeting held at the Memorial Hall on Monday 4th November 2024 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

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

In attendance: S Rawle (Clerk)
PC Ben Hicks - Neighbourhood Beat Manager
15 Members of the Public

PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm and welcomed those in attendance. The Chairman explained that the public forum was an opportunity for members of the public to voice their concerns about local matters to the parish council.

Large Delivery Vehicles

Cllr Barnham read out a statement received from a resident of Mill Street concerning an incident involving a 44 ton articulated lorry that came through the village twice on the 25th October. It was stated that the vehicle had passed within inches of residents properties and despite the driver manoeuvring the vehicle slowly and carefully it had caused extreme fear and anxiety to the affected householders. In the past it had been suggested that two medium-sized vehicles be used rather than one large vehicle however, it had been argued that this would be an increased financial burden to the business. It was felt that those who needed to move large loads through the village needed to accept the reality that the road was simply too narrow and tight a bend by the ford for larger, wider and longer lorries to pass safely and that the size of vehicles needed to be reduced to suit the conditions of the road.

Cllr Barnham opened the floor to comments on the issue.

Other members of the public were in agreement that the vehicles trying to pass through the village were too large for the size of the roads and they represented a danger to adjacent properties. It was felt that the size of the vehicles had been increasing in the last 2 years and that it was not only the height but also the length of the vehicles were a real concern.

It was noted that the one-way system worked well and that the regular drivers to the Rodhuish farms knew the road well. The amount of delivery vehicles had increased over the years because of Styles, however, this would likely reduce because of their relocation.

Cllr Barnham said that he had telephoned the delivery company directly and had been told that the farmer had only wanted one lorry in an effort to reduce cost.

Cllr Barnham asked PC Ben Hicks whether it would be deemed that an offence had been committed should vehicles ignore the 4m height sign. PC Hicks responded that he would check and come back to the parish council to confirm. It was observed that there was no corresponding sign at Dragons Cross or Lodge Rocks and therefore large vehicles travelling

northward towards the village were already committed without necessarily realising the height restriction before it was possible to make a u-turn.

The issue of poor parking by some residents was raised. Large vehicles passing the entrance of Lower Cottage have to manoeuvre onto their bridge in an attempt to pass the parked car opposite. Cllr Barnham agreed that due diligence needed to be observed and that residents should park considerately. PC Hicks said that the parish council could request that Somerset Highways carry out an assessment of the site and that keep clear lines could be marked on the road.

A question was raised concerning the possibility of reducing the speed limit to 20mph through the village. Cllr Barnham said that this could be re-looked at given the comments from the public this evening. PC Hicks suggested that the parish council may want to consider looking at a speed indicator device.

Concerns were raised regarding the subsidence of the road at Buckhill and Cllr Barnham reported that a further section of bank had fallen into the stream. He also reported that 2 persons from the Bridges Team of Somerset Council had been carrying out an assessment at the ford.

Cllr Barnham said that he wanted to emphasis that it was not just agricultural vehicles causing the problem but it applied to all business delivery vehicles.

The Chair thanked members of the public for their contributions.

The public open session closed at 7.30pm

2348 APOLOGIES

Cllr Christine Lawrence (Somerset Council), Cllr Kravis (Somerset Council)

2349 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS

None

2350 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 9th SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2351 CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLORS

Claire Tydeman and Paul Thomas had both expressed an interest in being co-opted onto the Parish Council. There were no further nominations. On the proposal of Cllr Hall seconded by Cllr Wintermantel, all agreed that Claire Tydeman be co-opted onto the Parish Council. On the proposal of Cllr Hall seconded by Cllr Huish, all agreed that Paul Thomas be co-opted onto the Parish Council. The acceptance of office forms were signed in the presence of the Clerk and other Councillors. Cllrs Tydeman and Thomas participated in the rest of the meeting.

2352 UPDATES/MATTERS ARISING (not part of later agenda items)

There were no matters arising.

2353 REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

No reports had been received from the Somerset Council Councillors.

PC Ben Hicks provided crime statistics up to end of September 2024.

2352 LARGE VEHICLES/HGVs

This item was brought forward on the agenda.

Councillors discussed the incident which took place on the 25th October involving a very large vehicle which attempted to pass through the village. In the earlier public forum parishioners had raised concerns about vehicles overheight and inconsiderate parking. Councillors also debated speed limits through the village and whether an introduction of a 20mph limit would improve matters. It was proposed by Cllr Crossman and seconded by Cllr Wintermantle to write to Highways to make a request for lining opposite Lower Cottage.

PC Ben Hicks left the meeting at this point. He was thanked by Councillors for his input and suggestions.

2354 FINANCES

2354.1 **Bank Reconciliation Statement** – The Clerk presented the bank reconciliation up to 31st October 2024. Cllr Barnham has carried out the reconciliation of the cash book against the bank statements up to 31st August 2024.

The bank reconciliation agreed with bank balances up to 31st October 2024 and was signed by the Chairman, as an accurate record. Bank balances were:-

• Account 95304622	£5,7770.90
• Account 44356501	£19,198.12
Total	£24,969.02

2354.2 **Budget Monitoring** – The income and expenditure against budget report was noted. For the benefit of the new Councillors the Clerk provided an explanation of the current ear-marked and general reserves position.

2354.3 **Income Received**

CAF (September & October) - £100.00

The Clerk reported that income continued to be received from St Nicholas Church, through CAF bank. The income would be ear-marked until the matter was resolved.

2355 DRAFT BUDGET 2025-26

A draft budget report had been prepared by the Clerk. The Clerk explained that a decision on the budget did not need to be made that evening but would form part of the debate on the precept at the January meeting. The draft budget report had been prepared in advance to provide Councillors plenty of time to consider the content.

2356 UPDATE ON NEW FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Cllr Barnham felt that a working group should be set up to look at the implications on the parish council of the new financial regulations that had been issued by the National Association of Councils. The Clerk suggested that the draft budget could form part of the working groups.

It was proposed by Cllr Barnham, seconded by Cllr Wintermantle that a working group be set up to look at the financial regulations and draft budget. The working group would report back at the meeting in January. It was agreed that Cllrs Barnham, Wintermantle and Tydeman would be on the working group.

2357 HIGHWAY UPDATES

Cllr Barnham reported that Somerset Council operatives had been assessing the state of the bottom of the ford. Still no progress on the road situation at Buckhill. Councillors suggested a cost effective solution could be to pipe the stream. Clerk instructed to contact Somerset Council and Magna.

2359 SOMERSET ELECTORAL REVIEW CONSULTATION

The Clerk had received notification that The Local Government Boundary Commission for England would be starting a 10 week consultation on division boundaries for Somerset Council. It would see the number of Somerset Councillors reduced from 110 to 96.

The consultation started on 22 October and would end on the 20 January 2025. Draft recommendations would be published in June 2025 with a further consultation period on the draft recommendations. The new electoral arrangements will come into effect at the local elections in 2027. More information could be found on the Boundary Commissions website www.lgbce.org.uk

2360 PLAY AREA & COMMUNITY AREA

Cllr Barnham reported that one of the long stay cars has moved on. He did not know who owned the other one, but would continue to make enquiries. It was confirmed that no overnight parking is part of the lease requirement.

The issue of accumulation of water at base of slide was discussed. Clerk to speak to Darrens Den.

2361 FLOOD INVESTIGATION REPORT

The draft Section 19 flood investigation report had been issued by Somerset Council following the major flood event in September 2023. It was open for comment by flood wardens, parish councillors and community contacts.

Comments to be returned by Friday 22nd November.

2362 DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE RESCUE PRECEPT CONSULTATION

The Clerk reported that the Devon & Somerset Fire Rescue precept consultation was open and running until 26th November. The consultation could be accessed online www.dsfire.gov.uk.

2363 UPDATES FROM MINEHEAD & WATCHET LCN MEETING

The latest meeting had been held on 17th October. Police are now regular attendees. Next meeting will be 9th January 2025.

There is a separate Highways sub group meeting which has been set up and meets bi-monthly.

2364 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Draft budget

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Signed _____
CHAIRMAN

Date _____