

MINUTES of THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING and
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
held on MONDAY 10th MAY 2021 – from 7.15 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Marilyn Crothers (Chair), Ben Lintott, Oliver Reynolds, Iain Mackie, Robin Wichard, Somerset Cllr Christine Lawrence and Carol Juffs – Clerk.

IN ATTENDANCE: Caroline Moore. No other residents had requested to attend the meeting, observing Covid guidelines.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

Councillor Mackie declared his interest as a neighbour directly adjacent to a planning application to be discussed at the meeting, and would abstain from comment in the meeting when discussed.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Elizabeth Scott, Cllr Marcus Kravis, PC Sue Thompson

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Although this is not an election year it was noted that the Chairman wished to stand down at the end of the meeting following an additional year in office to assist continuity during the Covid 19 pandemic. She agreed to remain as a Councillor.

The Vice-Chairman expressed his intention to step down from his office next year, and until the elections he would remain on the Council.

The Councillors agreed to retain their specific responsibilities for the forthcoming year, and Marilyn Crothers agreed to accept responsibility for Highways from Ben Lintott, and will shadow the role this year.

Highways – Ben Lintott will continue with the collaborative work of reporting Highway issues, and Marilyn Crothers will take this on next year.

Planning will remain the responsibility of Iain Mackie and Pathways with Robin Wichard.

3. ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FORMS

Not required in a non-election year

4. REVIEW

Subscriptions

It was agreed to continue with the subscription to SALC to remain affiliated – no renewal has been received to date but it is imminent.

Churchyard Maintenance

It was agreed to continue the contract with Derek Quartey for the closed church yard around the church.

Yearly Charity Donations

As there was no May meeting due to Covid in 2020, no charity donations were made. It was agreed to make donations for double the normal donation of £50 to both the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance and Exmoor Search and Rescue, who will receive £100 each.

5. SUMMARY REPORTS April 2020 – March 2021

Chairman's Report for the Year

The Chairman highlighted the very difficult year due to the pandemic and how Councillors had been magnificent to make Zoom/virtual meetings effective; to keep up-to-date with planning applications; to communicate with residents, and she thanked everyone.

In the Spring 2020 the Chairman had expressed her wish to retire as Chairman, but Covid 19 had precluded that and persuaded her to stay on in the role for another year. She tendered her resignation for the end of the meeting but offered to stay on as a Council member, which was unanimously agreed.

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council was in quite dire straits – less than perfect broadband connections; a Council of mature members; a lack of face-to-face interaction during the past year; closed venues like the EMN Hall and the Church due to government guidelines, have had a depressing effect on everybody; and the major employers in the Parish have had real struggles to keep their heads above water. We do need new Councillors to come forward to bring fresh life to the Parish Council. We are now below strength in numbers, but one or two steps have already been taken to remedy this.

A chart was circulated to illustrate the coverage of the hamlets forming the Parish – with the out-lying areas of Chidgley, Slade Lane/Lower Clitsome and Torre being unrepresented, and the lack of noticeboards to display information. Without a village centre, a pub, and the only public building being the Church, no WI or schools and limited post boxes, the Parish has been formed around the Nettlecombe Estate historically. It was proposed that Parish Councillors would delegate the responsibilities for the unrepresented hamlets and distribute information – Marilyn Crothers would be responsible for Chidgley, Robin Wichard for Fair Cross and Caroline Moore (shortly to be appointed Councillor) would take responsibility for Torre. It is hoped to recruit a Councillor from new residents for the Slade Lane area.

Iain Mackie was thanked for his hard work in dealing with all the planning applications through the year. Robin Wichard was thanked for his work related to our footpaths, and similarly Ben Lintott for his work with Highways issues. Liz Scott was thanked for keeping an eye on the Woodford and Nettlecombe Park lane areas, and Oliver Reynolds for insight on historical matters relating to the Parish. Martin Dewdney was thanked for keeping us well informed on SWAT issues and the Clerk, Carol Juffs was thanked for keeping everything up to speed in such a difficult year.

The Chairman also thanked our Somerset Councillor and the Somerset West & Taunton Councillors for attending our meetings through the year and keeping us informed, offering help and advice.

The Chairman has not attended any meetings for ENPA or Dunster Panel in the past year due to the pandemic.

Finances – Review for the Year

During the year payments were similar to the prior year, except for two contract changes – Black Cat Computers now provides IT support and the maintenance of our website. David Sykes has kept the website up to date including links to the Somerset Council's emergency Covid helpline, and how to stay safe, which we considered would be supporting the community and pro-active. Also links to the virtual books of condolence on the death of the Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh, and his help has been greatly appreciated.

Derek Quartly is responsible for the grounds maintenance of the Church yard and banks, with a slight saving over the prior year's costs, but this could be attributable to the season, as the hourly rate is similar to the previous contractor.

Zurich Municipal insurance was in a three year fixed price agreement, reviewable this coming year.

The Audit was carried out by Debbie Dennis and it had been omitted in the previous financial year to pay for her services to Audit the accounts for 2018/19, so this was rectified with two fees this year.

The SALC fee was paid during the year with only a marginal increase in the subscription cost.

We must remember there is a provision in the accounts of £750 to update the website, but that was on the back burner due to the pandemic.

We have ended the year with a balance of £3620

The precept, which was applied for earlier in the year at £2300, has recently been credited to our account on 22nd April 2021.

Thanks to the Clerk for the handling of the finances through the year were proposed by Ben Lintott and seconded by Oliver Reynolds.

County Councillor thanks

Somerset Councillor Christine Lawrence thanked the Parish for their support during the pandemic and difficult year experienced by everyone. Amazing how the small villages have got behind, looked after and cared for the people who are alone, checking on them and just being a friendly face. It was amazing the number of volunteers that came on board to assist, and a great help to the Council when everyone can just do a little bit.

Check/Leaky Dams update

The sediment collecting in the dam system will need regular removal as the build-up is 4x more effective than originally estimated. So instead of the proposed once every alternate year, it is more likely to be 3-4 times annually in terms of maintenance. It takes a lot of road run-off and debris with tonnes of silt building up. Problem comes

from the side flow not being used on roads to scoop up debris, leaf mulch, acorns etc to be removed by the Council, but builds up now and washes down with heavy rainfall.

The benefits though outweigh these problems as the water now reaching Yarde wood has diminished considerably, and it is not reaching the Yarde stream so heavily. Felled trees lower down the stream has slowed the flow rate of water.

Highways

Routine maintenance has been kept up despite Covid, with gully emptying also being carried out. More work undertaken on the drainage of Slade Lane with more re-surfacing scheduled soon.

A few temporary road closures through the year but nothing too inconvenient for the Parish.

Road from Egypt to Beggearn Huish has erosion from autumnal rain and the edge of the tarmac is breaking up.

Planning

A remarkably quiet year without people taking advantage of being at home to consider planning applications. Blade Mill continues to submit applications – the current one is for a single storey extension linked by a hall/porch area but too many other alterations have occurred, some without permission. An objection was submitted on the grounds of the extension being the same size to the Blade Mill and also with a proposed render finish when everything else was stone faced. Interestingly the Conservation Officer has posted a letter on the website repeating the same points. No formal decision has been made yet but it is anticipated it is leaning towards a rejection as well.

On the previous Appeal to the Secretary of State the feedback was that the Secretary of State did not feel the building was uninhabitable in its present size and form.

The landscaping work was considered by the Enforcement department to not need consent despite it being passed from Planning considering that it did.

Other applications have been relatively minor – approval of windows on a listed cottage at Woodford.

6. DATES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS FROM MAY 2021 – MAY 2022

On the second Monday of every third month

Monday August 9th at 8.00

Monday November 8th at 8.00

Monday February 14th 2022 at 8.00

Monday May 9th 2022 Annual Parish Meeting 7.15 and 8.00 AGM

7. ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE

No matters were raised

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING BUSINESS

8. MINUTES of the Meeting on February 8th 2021 (already circulated)

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting, proposed by Cllr Wichard and seconded by Cllr Lintott

9. Police Report

A report was submitted by Sue Thompson on behalf of Chief Inspector French.

The Police are settling in to new premises within the Council offices building in Killick Way, Williton. There are new members of staff and PCSO 6551 Zack Howe joins the Williton team with PCSOs Sue Marks and Sue Thompson covering the Parish. They can be found on the website www.avonandsomerset.police.uk and also on a new Facebook page Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing where regular postings on crime trends, prevention and details of events are.

Bike Register training has been given to the team, where bikes can be marked on a national register in a matter of minutes. Will attend local events and run workshops to carry this out, now that Covid regulations are easing.

Also, Selecta DNA is offered to victims of theft using a unique formula of DNA, UV tracer and microdots to mark equipment and highlight with stickers. Using this kit has proved a huge deterrent making equipment too high a risk and with little resale value.

The Neighbourhood team have introduced a newsletter to be circulated via email, giving an idea of crime statistics and any new initiatives in the area.

Good support from the Special Constabulary in the area. SC Simon Bale has been utilising a Police drone to assist in searches for missing people and vehicle trespassing on SSSI across the Quantocks and Exmoor.

It was agreed that the Clerk should follow up having a Bike Register at the Nettlecombe Fete in August, and to enquire whether Selecta DNA can be offered to residents of the Parish before crime takes place.

10. Open Forum – no residents present

11. SOMERSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Somerset Cllr Lawrence reported on the difficult year which has been a real challenge in many ways. She offered condolences to those losing family or friends to Covid. She thanked the volunteers and parish councillors visiting and supporting vulnerable villagers.

Working from home became the normal routine with Zoom or Teams virtual meetings, achieving considerable workloads otherwise thought to be unachievable.

A lot of Highways work was completed through the year and more will follow in 2021/22. Don't hesitate to get in touch by email to report problems.

A lot of new signage has gone up recently in the area, particularly towards Minehead. Cllr Lintott pointed out a problem with signage coming out of Williton – a right hand bend sign on a left hand bend!

With the slowing down of the Covid spread in the county and most people having now had vaccinations, 50,000 to date and even second injections, the Governments targets have been met. Although we are now allowed to move around more she reminded us of the need to wear masks and remember FACE-HANDS-SPACE and to provide ventilation.

Contact **help line 0300 790 6275** for any problems Covid related, will remain operational for a few months yet. Customer Care unit at County Hall has been extremely busy dealing with 13,600 registered calls to date, and with a check-up/return call to the person who made the call. 7,783 welfare calls have been made to support the most vulnerable. Work still continues in Contact Tracing and establishing local Lateral Flow testing sites and the roll-out of Home Lateral Flow testing kits.

Spark Somerset has now trained 100 Covid Champions across Somerset to support local communities. Loneliness has proved to be the biggest problem requiring help.

12. MATTERS OF REPORT from 8th February Meeting

Councillor vacancy

Caroline Moore accepted the role to join the Parish Council and represents Torre village where she resides.

Cllr Dewdney asked when Dunster Panel would be resuming and the Chairman will look into this.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

No items of Correspondence were received by the Chairman or Clerk, but an email was received following the death of The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh, to provide links on our website to virtual books of Condolence on the Church of England and Royal websites. Also to point out that as requested by the Government due to Covid regulations there would be no physical book of condolence in Nettlecombe church.

14. REPORTS

Chairman's Report

Covered in Minute 5 above.

Highways

Covered in Minute 5 above.

Planning

Current application for land opposite Beggearn Huish Farm. It was a Declaration of Interest at the outset of the meeting that Councillor Mackie could not comment on this part of the proceedings. The Chairman led the discussion. The proposal formed two planning applications – one for an Agricultural building to rear calves and the second for temporary accommodation for someone to look after the livestock. The proposals were discussed by

the other Councillors and agreed that a response to be sent to SWAT Planning by the Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council.

The objection would be on the grounds of the size of the building compared to the acreage of just over 21 acres. There is insufficient detail on supplies of electricity, gas or mains water. The proposal to rear calves to generate income and qualify are detailed, and also the use of the fattening cattle already kept on the land, selling the meat boxed, direct to the public. But it remains unclear about the slaughter details, refrigeration to keep the meat, and the increased traffic this will generate.

The dwelling is described as a temporary dwelling, but they state they have to live there for the animals' welfare and need permanent accommodation. There is also no indication of the timescale for the 'temporary' requirement and the details seem quite elaborate for a temporary dwelling.

The access to the property is tight for the increased traffic with high walls to either side at the pinch point in the approach. The approach from Torre village is not suitable for large vehicles required to transport the larger animals.

The building will be very tall and disproportionate to the acreage available, despite requiring adequate ventilation for the livestock.

Also concern for the public footpath in the adjacent field, which will need to be stoutly fenced where the cattle are concerned, to protect walkers using the public footpath.

It might be considered an opportunity to gain a house on the land when the livestock project fails, like another nearby project.

The Clerk will write on behalf of the Parish Council to Somerset West and Taunton Planning department referring to both planning applications by 14th May, summarising these points.

If anyone wants to check on the progress of any application, please refer to the website:
somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/planning-weekly-list/

Footpaths

Been a fairly quiet year with a few issues of fallen trees and branches that have been cleared as required. Recently Robin Wichard tracked down the current owners of the land which the footpath crosses opposite Beggearn Huish Farm. Identifying the third party liability should an accident occur when a walker is injured using the path, or in this case intimidated by livestock, focused the owner to maintain the footpath.

EMN Hall

The Bookings secretary Sonya Bethune is contactable via email on: Richard.j.bethune@gmail.com. Due to Covid 19 restrictions the EMN Hall had been closed until May 6th 2021 and therefore no events to report.

West Somerset Flood Group

Cllr Reynolds reported that there had been a change in Chairman, but he had not received any information recently.

Finance

It was agreed to send cheque donations of £100 to both Exmoor Search and Rescue and the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance charities.

It was retrospectively agreed to pay the Black Cat Computers invoice for 12 months hosting of the website £75.00, which had to be paid on a timely basis in April.

It was agreed to pay the Black Cat Computers Invoice for Domain name renewal of our website £40.00 and the Black Cat Computers invoice for website maintenance including Covid Notice updates and links to the Duke of Edinburgh on-line books of condolence, as well as notices, minutes and agendas, at £40 each.

Approved by Robin Wichard and seconded by Martin Dewdney.

EMN Hall – invoice not yet received - £30 last year, but will need to be paid prior to August meeting. Approved Ben Lintott and seconded Iain Mackie.

Zurich Insurance – invoice not yet received but will need to be paid ahead of August meeting – fixed cost in three year agreement £167.44 last year. Proposed Ben Lintott seconded Robin Wichard.

It was agreed to pay the Clerk's salary of £261.04 for the period of April to June 2021
Proposed by Ben Lintott and seconded by Robin Wichard.

15. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The completed Annual Governance Statement was agreed and signed by the Finance Officer and Chairman

16. ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2020 - 2021

The Accounts for the year had been circulated prior to the meeting and were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

17. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS INFORMATION

The Nettlecombe fete has had to be moved due to Covid 19 restrictions. It will now take place on August 28th 2021 to help raise funds for repairs to the Church Tower.

Yarde are still chasing for the re-installation of the Post Box. County Highways have replaced the cast iron road sign on the triangle. Hedge clearing has caught the cable on the telegraph pole which is shared by electricity board and telephone. Some of the support cables have been cut, and both companies have been notified about this share pole.

Broadband internet position is still dire and several schemes are being investigated for assistance. New residents have moved into Yarde and one hoped to run his business from home but the internet hampers his business.

The Clerk completed an on-line Government survey on the now closed on-line meeting experience and the responses were circulated to the Councillors. It was highlighted that the poor broadband position through the parish was the main consideration to the effectiveness of the meetings. It is hoped the survey may result in giving councils the option to hold virtual meetings in the future.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – MONDAY AUGUST 9TH AT 8.00 PM

Monday August 9th 2021 at 8pm at the EMN Hall with social distancing regulations.

The Chairman resigned from her post at the end of a meeting and a presentation was made from the Councillors thanking her for her very long and successful time in office – more than twenty five years!

Robin Wichard was elected as the incoming Chairman proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Ben Lintott

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chair: Date: