

**Minutes of the MEETING OF NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD AT THE EMN HALL, MONKSILVER  
MONDAY 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 8.00 pm**

**Present:**

Councillors Robin Wichard (Chair), Iain Mackie, Martin Dewdney, Liz Scott, Marilyn Crothers, Oliver Reynolds, Caroline Moore, Somerset Cllr Christine Lawrence, SWAT Councillors Marcus Kravis and Steve Griffiths and Carol Juffs (Clerk)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Cllrs Ben Lintott, Oliver Reynolds and Martin Dewdney

**2. Minutes of the Meeting held on August 9<sup>th</sup> 2021**

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting

**3. OPEN FORUM – ALL RESIDENTS**

No residents attended the meeting. Marilyn Crothers advised of the theft of two cars' tyre valves at the Quantock Filling station, rendering the cars immobile. The matter was reported to the Police.

**4. POLICE REPORT**

No report was received prior to the meeting but a recent newsletter from the Police and a notice regarding an increase in burglaries from outbuildings had recently been circulated.

**5. SOMERSET AND SOMERSET WEST & TAUNTON COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

Cllr Lawrence encouraged everyone to take their Covid booster as the Covid numbers rose locally but now settling down. The latest R rate for Somerset is between 0.9 and 1.1. Covid Helpline 0300 790 6275 open 7 days a week 8am to 6pm.

Local Government re-organisation taking place towards a single Unitary Council for Somerset. The transition programme, lead teams and governance structure have been agreed by all Councils with first official meeting last week on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2021. Draft Statutory Orders were circulated today before going to Parliament in January 2022, prior to the new Authority date set for April 2023 with 110 councillors.

There has been major investment in infrastructure with £10m improvements to the A38 leading to Bridgwater, £3.4m funding for cycling and walking infrastructure along the entire corridor, and approval to re-open Wellington train station.

Cllr Griffiths was welcomed to the meeting. In working towards a Unitary Council, a draft Order giving the Government's proposals for the changes was sent to the 5 Councils who have two weeks to respond to the proposals.

Cllr Kravis reiterated the importance of Covid boosters. Over the coming months the transition for some 4000 Council staff would be a consideration, and as to whether their jobs would continue in the re-organisation. The new Chief Executive will be elected – Andrew Pritchard nominated as CEO.

Ground breaking ceremony today at Taunton for the Digital Innovation Centre being built on SWAT land - a £9m project. Trying to create an innovation district to retain high-end jobs in the area, in addition to Shearwell Data on Exmoor and Singer in Roadwater.

Hinckley Point wants to increase staffing for 5000 – 8000 because of delays to their programme. Will impact on accommodation and transport in the area, proposals from EDF Energy being considered at next meeting with Councillors.

Taunton bus station was closed, purchased by SWAT and plans to turn site to a multi-storey car park, but consideration to transition for Unitary authority may impact this.

Harbour Board meeting took place for Watchet attended by Cllr Kravis. The walls have been completed, electrics project in progress, and railings need painting black!

Cllr Kravis attended Exmoor and West Somerset Tourism meeting where Nigel Huddleston Minister for Sport and Tourism met hospitality providers last week. Good to have high profile connection for the area.

## **6. CORRESPONDENCE**

Shortly after the last meeting the Parochial Church Council had contacted the Clerk to advise of a change to their Contractor for the mowing of the graveyards, as Mr Derek Quartly was giving up the contracts for both the PCC and Parish Council mowing work. It was agreed that under normal circumstances three quotes would be sought, but following the effect of the pandemic it has been hard to find contractors still practising landscaping work. As he is recommended by Lucy Devitt of the PCC it was agreed to also use the same contractor. Daren Grellier, from Bilbrook, has now completed the second and final cut for the season and will be submitting his invoice. Marilyn Crothers offered to meet the contractor to discuss the additional work required to keep the Woodford ditch clear.

We received an email from Richard Bethune to remove his private email from the website Minutes. This email was given to us originally by the EMN Chairman to make bookings for the EMN Hall, but a new one has now been created – [emnhalldiary@gmail.com](mailto:emnhalldiary@gmail.com). Black Cat Computers has deleted the personal email from previous Minutes 9/11/20 on the website.

## **7. MATTERS OF REPORT**

There were no specific Matters to report.

## **8. REPORTS – CURRENT**

### **Chairman's report**

The Chairman attended, via Zoom, the Exmoor CPF meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Two main issues discussed were Farming in Protected landscapes and the health of the moorland heather.

Environmental Land Management and two other agencies have provided a fund of £500k to finance suitable projects over three year period. Key criteria for the projects are Nature/People/Place. For example the Nature element could include adding trees to enhance/create wildlife areas. People - refers to accessibility. Place - could involve building restoration – the ENP lead on this is Alex Farris., and the Chairman is waiting a response to several questions he has posed via email.

The general view is that the heather on Exmoor is on the decline but there is no definitive answer as to why. Beetle infestation is regarded as a key agent, but research is needed to expand on this. There are however some areas of encouraging regeneration and recovery.

### **Dunster Panel, ENPA**

Nothing to report

### **Highways**

Concern for the condition of the road from Egypt to Vempletts Cross, which has been worn away by heavy agricultural vehicles. In wet conditions the gravel and mud slumps across the T-junction after blocking the three drains on the hill. We need to write to the Highways department raising these concerns.

Several narrow lanes around the Parish are being used by vehicles travelling too fast. Many have similar problems of drains blocking with debris washed down from the banks, which are subsequently cleared by residents.

Cllr Scott reported that the overhanging foliage in Torre on the corner where the house is for sale, just past the field on the blind bend, is becoming a danger. The Chairman will visit the residents to discuss the concerns.

In regard to the parking roadside at Yarde, the Chairman went to the residents to ask if they could avoid parking in the road, and the situation has considerably improved since.

### **Footpaths**

Liz Scott reported that the footpath in Woodford was still very overgrown, although there is now a grass strip around the recently ploughed field. The path from Home Farm to Huish Barton needs clearing.

### **Planning**

Torre House a listed building was requiring permission to replace a couple of windows. There were no objections so no comment was sent to the Planners.

Land at Beggearn Huish, behind The Manor house, had many objections from residents in Torre and Beggearn Huish. An objection was sent from the Parish Council, on the basis that it was too big for the 20 acre plot, and yet the Planners passed it anyway, without any input from the Highways department. Two Consents – one for 7000 sq ft building to commence in March 2022, and the temporary dwelling. An independent Agricultural report swayed the decision, highlighting a further 140 acres of land for the enterprise, located several miles away, near Luxborough. The 'cabin' accommodation is a large house of 136 sq metres for 3 years. Applicant has stated that he will apply for permanency after the three years.

Concerns for how the construction traffic will access the site on a blind corner, with large steel portal frame sections, and a tight right angle access off the lane. It was disheartening that everyone objected about the traffic aspect and yet Highways did not carry out a full appraisal.

Cllr Marilyn Crothers represented the Parish Council at the meeting to specifically ask about the lease being adequate for the additional parcel of land that had materialised for the applicant. It was confirmed the lease was for 5 years but the nature of the agreement was not questioned by the Committee.

The Blade Mill Appeal has been submitted and is awaiting the appointment of a Planning Inspector. The initial documents and lengthy planning statement by the applicant have been submitted.

Originally a large 'garage' was built, and there were several objections. Planning enforcement meant the roof line was lowered and the roof lights subsequently removed. It was a larger structure than originally granted in 2014.

There have been several applications submitted to extend the Blade Mill itself – a small building of historic interest – a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. Formerly, as its name suggests used for sharpening agricultural implements, sited adjacent to the vital stream.

Submission to the Appeal is to change the use of the garage into a house, and down grade the one bedroom Blade Mill to ancillary accommodation. A reason stated is that the garage is less prone to flooding – last known to flood in the 1850s when a pig notably got stuck under the bridge!

It fails to mention that he had to get retrospective permission for the garage which was illegally built at the time, and that the applicant will no longer have the 'essential' garage and workshop of previous applications.

An original Consent granted to build a two storey extension to the Blade Mill, was allowed to expire in 2017 after he purchased the property.

The landscaped terracing to the rear of the property is disproportionate to the building and was initially considered to need planning consent. But when passed to the Enforcement department they did not feel consent was required.

It may be some time before the Appeal is considered due to the backlog in the Planning department. The Parish Council will wait to respond by letter. The major concern is that it sets a precedent if granted, as it is the only building on that side of the road, and sits outside the National Park.

#### **EMN Hall**

There does not appear to be much activity currently at the Hall and therefore no report has been received.

#### **West Somerset flood Group**

There was no update submitted from West Somerset Flood Group.

#### **Other Parish Matters**

The Parish Fete held on August Bank Holiday Saturday raised as much money as in previous years despite its relocated date, due to the pandemic. The fete will return to May in 2022.

The Church tower is to be examined due to its poor state of repair. The bells cannot be chimed at present. The work on the effergies is still on-going.

## **Clerk finance**

The spreadsheet of expenditure reconciled to the recent bank statement was circulated prior to the meeting, with a balance of £4399 in the bank, signed as seen by the Chairman.

There has been less mowing in the contract with a budget of £750. Derek Quartly submitted his one and only invoice for £375 and Daren Grelier will be submitting an invoice for £100 for the two cuts he has achieved to the end of the season. Approval was given for both these expenditures.

Three further payments were also approved by Marilyn Crothers and seconded by Iain Mackie:

Black Cat Computers £40.00 for recent work on the website

E Carol Juffs - Clerk for the quarter's salary £261.04

E C Juffs incidental stationery expenditure including stamps etc £21.62

## **9. PARISH PRECEPT 2022/23**

The Councillors considered the expenditure to date as compared to the year's budget. There is still provision for work to the upgrade of the website, and an under spend on the mowing contract. It was considered not necessary to increase the amount requested, and to be cautious about reducing it, as for example fuel costs have increased.

The Councillors unanimously agreed to apply for the same amount of £2300 as per last year. Proposer Iain Mackie, seconded Marilyn Crothers.

The Chairman and Clerk signed the Parish Council Precept 2022/23 form to be scanned and emailed to Parish Precept at Somerset West and Taunton.

## **10. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION**

Update that Ray Dowd at Slade House has reported finally completing their building work after two years, following problems with the glazing – the heat reflective glass was fitted on the wrong side.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting – Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 8.00 pm**