

**Minutes of the MEETING OF THE NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD AT THE EMN HALL, MONKSILVER
MONDAY 7TH FEBRUARY AT 8.00 PM**

AGENDA

Present:

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Ben Lintott, Liz Scott and Sue Thompson Police Community Support Officer

2. MINUTES of the meeting of 8th November 2021

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting

3. POLICE REPORT

PC Sue Thompson sent a report for the meeting highlighting a spate of burglaries in the area, but notably not the recent thefts from sheds and outbuildings in Beggearn Huish. ECJ to follow this up. Also the report on stolen quad bikes from Roadwater suggested the culprits had been apprehended and the vehicles recovered, whereas local reports suggest the van was set on fire and the bikes lost in the blaze. Clarification to be sought from the Police.

With the current pressures on the average family budget everyone was advised to secure property and belongings that may be targeted by criminals.

The Police are operating a free Bike register to mark bikes as a proven way to reduce crime. Next event is on Watchet Esplanade during half term on Wednesday February 23rd.

Advice in regard to internet and telephone scams was also given, and to watch for the vulnerable elderly living on their own.

4. OPEN FORUM – FOR ALL RESIDENTS

There were no residents attending the meeting for the forum.

5. SOMERSET and SOMERSET WEST & TAUNTON DEANE COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Christine Lawrence gave an update on the rising Coronavirus statistics and the need to continue to be cautious, ventilate indoors, and to maintain social distancing, while the risk of the latest variant Omicron remains high.

The move to a single Unitary Council was supported by The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and laid before Parliament on January 24th 2022. The agreed vesting date remains April 1st 2023 and the first elections will be held on May 5th 2022.

The Council Revenue budget was published ahead of the new unitary authority in April 2023. Proposing increases in investment in care services with an increase of £18m for Adult Care and £12+m for Children's services. The increase in Adult care supports a recent decision to increase carers' pay and a retention bonus for care staff in Somerset, in a challenging job market for care staff.

It is proposed to allocate £48m to capital spending in the year ahead, including investment in measures to tackle climate change. £1m allocated for electric fleet vehicles and a charging infrastructure, and a further £1m to local transport schemes.

It was noted that Somerset County Council has been ranked as the top County Council in the UK when it comes to taking a lead on climate change, and Somerset West and Taunton as the top district council.

Local Libraries are running a 'Welcome back' campaign to encourage customers to return after the effects of the pandemic, with incentives such as no charges for late returns, and no charges to young people using the Library services.

Cllr Martin Dewdney asked whether out-sourced carers visiting the elderly in their own homes were all vaccinated and how this could be proven as they were a concern to the elderly living on their own, receiving this assistance. It was suggested that rather than approach the carers individually, the agency or home providing the staff doing community visits should be approached, to clarify the risk situation to the vulnerable patients.

There was discussion about the congested care homes, to free up the hospital beds but not yet the need to rely on hotels that came forward offering space if needed during the pandemic.

Cllr Marcus Kravis reported the budgets are balanced and goes to the Executive next Wednesday, with £0.5m fund for climate change.

New water filling stations are being built in order that people can re-fill their water bottles locally.

Local projects - The RNLI have benefited from purchasing the site they occupy in Minehead. The wall has been completed at Watchet and looks really good, complete with new electrics for the lighting.

Business grants still on-going but hospitality has been an issue in the pandemic.

The Queen's canopy in Minehead is going ahead with an avenue of trees.

An Innovation conference will be held in Taunton, possibly in September, to support the Innovation Centre project.

Swimming Pool proposed for Minehead on made-up land, with a feasibility study created a couple of years ago, pre the pandemic. The project has been ring-fenced for the site and funding will be sought.

6. MATTERS of REPORT FROM 8TH November meeting

Cllr Oliver Reynolds raised his concern over the proposals for the A38 corridor locally which seems to be a lot of money to put a cycle way in a narrow roadway. Similar investments like the cycle pathway towards Bridgwater gets very little use for the investment, but taking valuable agricultural land.

Also concerns over the management of Exmoor Park and the vegetation problems with the heather, strangled by the vigorous gorse, and now planting trees, after a clearance programme. Stock have been removed from the hills and the deer are in a poor way. Appears to be a lack of coherent policy or management structure.

It was proposed to invite someone from Exmoor National Park to speak at a future meeting. Suggestion that Sarah Bryant, the Chief Executive should be approached.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence received.

8. REPORTS

Chairman's report

RW

The Chairman reported that it had been a quiet period over the last three months. Several meetings were cancelled locally through lack of support including the Exmoor National Park Consultation meeting.

Several Parishioners had been approached in person about overgrown hedges in Torre, which had been acted upon, and roadside parking in Yarde which had now eased.

The Chairman had met with the Chairman of Monksilver Parish Council, Mervyn Orchard-Lisle, to discuss the proposals for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June - see agenda item 9 below.

Dunster Panel, EPNA

RW

There have been no meetings. Cllr Dewdney asked if there was a likelihood of Dunster Panel starting up again as this was vital for the community. Cllr Lawrence agreed and Cllr Kravis believed it would be re-starting following the pandemic lockdown. It is a vital link for communication on many issues.

The battery storage units are of a similar size to shipping containers and there appears to be no mention of siting them. The flatter area of the site floods readily and would not be suitable, but access to the hill area towards Watchet is limited, other than through the farm access.

In the UK we used to produce about 80% of our food requirements and this has reduced to barely 55%. With re-wilding projects, solar farms and other projects taking valuable agricultural land on a large scale, coupled with local housing proposals, we need to support the loss of valuable agricultural land locally.
Councillor Mackie to draft a response from the Parish Council.

Cllr Dewdney raised the issue of the 21-day consultation period for the planning application being raised on 24th December, Christmas eve, which is inappropriate timing given all the bank holidays, and reduces the response time available.

There has been no further news relating to the land at Beggearn Huish belonging to Alex Ashworth.

Footpaths

RW

Regrettably the Chairman has not been well over the past few months and was unable to walk the local pathways to report on their condition. It was reported that the fence on the entrance to the footpath at Egypt is collapsing, which is in ENP.

The Council also circulated details about Parish Path Liaison Officers PPLO, which we will not be signing up to because of the considerable commitment required recording the hours allocated to the work etc. for a voluntary role.

EMN Hall

No report has been received as the Hall is not fully functioning during this pandemic.

We need clarification from the EMN committee as to whether the hiring fee is retrospective or for the year ahead. No fee was paid last year as we did not use the Hall. We will ask for the selected dates in 2022-3 and request an invoice.

West Somerset Flood Group

OR

There was a zoom meeting some time ago, but no recent activity since our last meeting. If anyone is interested in shadowing this role or taking it on please come forward.

Clerk – Finance

ECJ

It was agreed to update the Coronavirus message on our Parish website, following changes in the legislation recently. To remind people to stay safe, socially distance and take a Lateral Flow test if they have any symptoms.

A spreadsheet of the financial position at the Bank was circulated. The only outstanding invoice is for the final two grass cuts invoice for £100 to Daniel Grolier yet to be submitted.

Oliver Reynolds proposed the payment of the Clerk's salary £261.04 for the three months January to March inclusive, seconded by Martin Dewdney.

9. QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS from June 3rd 2022

The Chairman has had several conversations with the Chair of Monksilver Parish Council, Mervyn Orchard-Lisle, about a proposal to celebrate on Sunday 5th June, combining with Elworthy and Nettlecombe. There is a meeting next Friday 11th February to discuss this further at The Old Rectory, Monksilver. The Chairman is unable to attend and asked if anyone could go to this brainstorming exercise on his behalf.

The Parish Council was in support of joining with Monksilver and will be interested to hear about progress with their plans, and how we might be able to assist.

10. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION

The Parish Encumbent is retiring at Easter and takes her last service on Easter Sunday.

Daniel Grewcock at Nettlecombe Court would like to host the Parish Supper this year and proposed several dates in November. It was agreed to opt for Friday November 18th 2022.

ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS MAY 5TH 2022

We anticipate it will be an un-contested election. No forms have been circulated yet by the Council.

It is understood Cllr Ben Lintott is standing down, which the Chairman will confirm.

11. Date of Next Meeting AGM – Monday 9th May 2022