

**MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**held on MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022 – 8.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Iain Mackie, Marilyn Crothers, Liz Scott, Caroline Moore  
Somerset Cllr Christine Lawrence and Cllr Marcus Kravis

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Residents Richard and Wendy Perry.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST:**

None declared

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Martin Dewdney and Carol Juffs - Clerk

**2. CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLORS**

Councillor Reynolds and Councillor Mackie were co-opted to the Council, proposed by Liz Scott and seconded by Marilyn Crothers.

**3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Chair:** Marilyn Crothers chaired this part of the meeting in the absence of a vice-chair, Oliver Reynolds proposed that Robin Wichard should be re-elected to the post, seconded by Liz Scott. Robin Wichard accepted the post.

**Vice-Chair:** Iain Mackie was nominated by the Chairman, proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Marilyn Crothers.

**Other Committee Responsibilities:** Highways Marilyn Crothers, Planning – Iain Mackie, Footpaths – Robin Wichard, West Somerset Flood Group representative – Caroline Moore

**4. ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FORMS and REGISTER OF INTERESTS**

These were circulated and completed by the Councillors.

**5. REVIEW**

**Subscriptions**

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

**Churchyard Maintenance**

It was agreed to continue the contract with Daren Grellier, Garden Care & Creation, for the closed church yard around the church, and the embankment of the overflow ditch in Woodford.

**Yearly Charity Donations**

It was agreed to support Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance and Exmoor Search and Rescue, who will receive £50 each, proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Robin Wichard. Additional request this year from Monksilver Parish Council to match the one-off contribution of £100 to the Jubilee celebrations fund. Proposed by Robin Wichard and seconded by Iain Mackie.

**6. SUMMARY REPORTS April 2021 – March 2022**

**Chairman's Report for the Year**

The Chairman's first report in his role as Chair highlighted the frustrating previous couple of years and the lockdowns due to Covid, leading to many meetings being cancelled or conducted over the internet, which was far from a satisfactory solution in a rural area plagued by poor internet reception, as we are.

Dunster Panel meetings have stopped entirely and as yet have not recommenced, which means that a vital tool in local networking and communication has been lost to us.

The Exmoor National Park Consultative meetings have resumed albeit still virtually, as have the West Somerset Flood Group Meetings, which are at least in person again.

Slowly we are returning to normal following the pandemic as the structures and groups that we rely upon for support are coming back to life.

The change to the new Unitary Authority for Somerset has yet to impact us and we look forward to working with our elected representatives in our area.

Sadly, we received the resignation of our Chairman over the last two decades – Councillor Marilyn Crothers, although she remains as a Councillor and her vast knowledge of the Parish and general wisdom is not lost. Our sincere thanks to Marilyn for all that she has done for the Parish.

The lack of meetings has meant that we have achieved rather less than we might have hoped for although we have continued to respond to planning applications and maintain our commitment to the grass cutting around Nettlecombe church graveyard.

The issue of Parking within the parish remains a challenge, but with the co-operation of neighbours we have been able to address the problem in Yarde, with substantially reduced roadside parking.

A number of issues relating to Highways has been addressed over the year, largely relating to potholes and overhanging vegetation with some success.

Many thanks are due to fellow councillors and especially due to our clerk Carol Juffs, for their on-going support and commitment as we look forward to another year.

**Dunster Panel:**

Nothing to report as the meetings have not been held.

**Exmoor National Park Association:**

Although the meetings have resumed on-line the Chairman was unable to gain access to the latest meeting via the internet to attend.

**Highways:**

Marilyn Crothers reported that the pothole between Egypt and Yarde was repaired shortly after the last meeting. Now hoping to address the crumbling verge on the lane from Egypt to Beggearn Huish.

**Planning:**

Iain Mackie reported that it had been a relatively quiet year with one or two minor applications of no particular planning significance. Of more concern was the recent planning appeal decision on the Blade Mill, which the residents of Yarde will be aware of. Also the development in Beggearn Huish where a large agricultural building of 7000 square feet is being erected on a relatively small plot of 20 acres. Consent was granted along with accommodation on a three-year consent, and they have already commented they intend to apply for permanent accommodation when that expires.

Outside the Parish, of more concern is the solar farm application behind Tropiquaria with no decisions yet made. It is a large planned development on good agricultural land and we have supported Old Cleeve and Williton, both of whom objected, as did Watchet Town Council.

**Footpaths:**

It has been a quiet year with the majority of footpaths being [ maintained by ENP

**EMN Hall**

No report has been received.

**7. DATES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS FROM MAY 2022 – MAY 2023**

**On the second Monday of every third month**

Monday August 8<sup>th</sup> at 8.00

Monday November 14<sup>th</sup> at 8.00

Monday February 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 at 8.00

Monday May 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 Annual Parish Meeting 7.15 and 8.00 AGM

**8. ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE**

No matters were raised

**9. MINUTES of the Meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2022 (already circulated)**

Item 8 Highways – the names are Helen and David, and Mike Quint.

Subject to these alterations the Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting.

**10. Police Report**

No report has been received to date. It is uncertain whether PCSO Sue Thompson has retired.

**11. Open Forum**

Local residents Richard and Wendy Perry were welcomed to the meeting. Mr Perry asked about reinstating the postbox at Yarde. He had witnessed the work being carried out by BT/Open Reach when two posts were replaced and the postbox, which was attached to one pole, was removed and discarded in the ditch. The nearest other postal box is Williton, and therefore Mr Perry would like to take over trying to get it reinstated as the previous resident, Roz Owen (who has been dealing with the Post Office on behalf of residents) is now moving.

In the past the telegraph poles were owned by the GPO, who services post boxes and cabling, and post boxes were installed on telegraph posts, (now owned by BT Open Reach) but on this occasion permissions had not been sought from the Post Office and therefore the postbox could not be replaced on the newly installed Open Reach pole. Many approaches were made by Roz, as the designated person of contact, and no-one has been able to follow this up in recent months, even the Chairman of the PC. It is appalling that such an amenity has been removed for the village. The Parish Council offered their support to Mr Perry to pursue this on behalf of Yarde residents.

Mrs Perry reported that the Notice board had been listing into the road and a few weeks ago it was propped back up. The Chairman assured her that work to repair this was in progress.

Mr Perry also asked about the internet provision in Yarde – an area of no specific support with a download speed of 1.3 on a good day. The residents attempted to go through the BT service obligation scheme offering £3400 approximately to households in the scheme for installation of a box to property fibre system. The majority of properties in Yarde were interested and ready to sign up, but Air Band scuppered the progress. Air Band originally wanted to put a mast up, which had to be relocated to Huish Barton Farm and lowered by 10 metres, not leaving Yarde in sight of the signal. Air Band has been given the contract to roll out fibre broadband in 2024/5 and on the website clearly states Yarde will be provided with a 30megabyte/second download speed from their mast. However, the Chairman has expressed concerns that this is not achievable – backed up by an Air Band engineer's report. Yarde remains in-eligible for the Universal Service obligation as another provider exists – as stated on Air Band's website. Until that is removed USO will not get involved, which is very frustrating.

Somerset Cllr Kravis asked for a statement of the current broadband position and he would try to follow this up.

**12. SOMERSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS**

District Councillor Steve Griffiths explained that it was his first and last report to the Annual Parish Meeting having been elected last June and in April 2023 the new Somerset Unitary Authority will come into being.

Environment and Climate change – in January the authority was ranked as the top performing district council in analysis by Climate Emergency UK.

The Council began rolling out a programme of electrical charging point installations in public car parks throughout the district.

£100k was allocated for tree planting and it is hoped to continue the programme in this last year of the District Council's existence.

Housing – two sites were allocated for more Council housing in Taunton and Minehead. The site in Minehead is off Seaward Way, where ground clearance has already begun.

Coastal erosion and related coastal issues – following the earlier storm damage to Watchet Harbour an additional £850,000 was spent on repairs to the East Quay section of the Harbour Wall. The change of management of the harbour has resulted in the long needed programme to dredge the harbour and its accumulated mud.

At Blue Anchor the sea defence works to protect the B3191 and buildings have begun and a second phase of more substantial works will commence later in the summer.

Employment and Commerce – new employment sites have been created in Minehead at Seaward Way and town centres in West Somerset have benefited from £210k allocated by SWAT to re-open after Covid outbreak.

Cllr Kravis reported that work continued throughout the run up to the elections, and he assumes his new role as County Councillor from midnight. He gave his personal congratulations to Cllr Christine Lawrence with her return to office. The Lib-Dems now have a 61 representation.

Recent projects include the new pay machines to include touch payment by phone in car parks, including Dunster. He urged everyone to look at the Council website News section for details of the most recent projects completed locally. There is wide sponsorship for Ukrainian refugees but it is still quite protracted to get people over here – a national issue.

Out reach has been getting to communities, as part of Step Up Somerset to help people with mobility issues, getting employment advice.

Campaign to fix electrical appliances which are thrown away too readily and become landfill. Led by the Climate Change strategy but also the cost of materials is very high and can be recycled.

Cllr Reynolds expressed his concern that tree planting programmes, solar panel and many other projects are taking valuable agricultural land during a food crisis where farming food production is falling in this country, during the withdrawal from the EU and the Russian invasion of Ukraine Crisis, and asked the County Councillors to keep this in mind when decision taking. Cllr Kravis reported that the Exmoor Young Rangers put across the exact same point and probably before the Ukraine Crisis even. So this is has certainly been highlighted, with genuine concern about food security.

The Chairman also passed on congratulations to Cllr Christine Lawrence for her appointment.

**13. MATTERS OF REPORT** from 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 Meeting

Nothing additional to add.

**14. CORRESPONDENCE**

No items of Correspondence were received by the Chairman or Clerk.

**15. REPORTS**

**Chairman's Report**

Covered in Minute 5 above.

**Dunster Panel, ENPA**

Nothing to report.

**Highways**

Coulton lane drainage has not been dealt with yet. Lane from Egypt leading to Beggearn Huish needs to be repaired where the sides have eroded with storm water. Clitsome Lane is also wearing badly with delivery lorries cutting through.

Also junction from Woodford up to turn into Nettlecombe Court – large potholes are appearing from traffic turning down to the Court. The size of the coaches delivering the pupils to the Court is an issue, and needs to be communicated to Nettlecombe Court.

### **Planning**

No new applications as of today, but if anyone wants to read the Blade Mill Appeal Cllr Mackie has a copy. The Blade Mill has been downgraded to ancillary accommodation to the converted garage, but the definition of ‘ancillary accommodation’ does vary widely. It could be converted to a granny annexe with separate bathroom and kitchen, or could be changed into an office, or simply storage. Though previously permission to extend the original base of the Blade Mill was given and work started. We need to monitor the progress there, particularly as it is the only property on that side of the road in Yarde, and the only one outside ENP.

Cllr Reynolds had spoken to the new residents of Berryman’s Cottage who may submit an application for digging back part of the garden, building a retaining wall and create a parking space to keep his vehicle off the road. They are in discussion with ENP at present.

If anyone wants to check on the progress of any application please refer to the website:

**[somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/planning-weekly-list/](https://somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/planning-weekly-list/)**

### **Footpaths**

No problem had been reported to the Chairman recently.

The footpath from Nettlecombe Court to Huish Barton was no longer in existence and needs ENP to investigate this. Also the footpath towards Wood Advent is overgrown with brambles etc along the field perimeter.

### **Finance**

It was agreed to send a cheque donation of £100 to Monksilver’s Jubilee Picnic organisers – see Minute 5. Black Cat Computers website maintenance invoice for £70 was recently paid and agreed retrospectively.

The Chairman referred to the National Salary Award for Clerks paper in order to review the Clerk’s salary. The definition of Level 1 is a role requiring practical and procedural knowledge across a technical specialist area or equivalent level of organisational procedure or policy knowledge. It applies to a small or medium parish, few statutory functions, up to 6 meetings a year, no staff, no devolved functions, and a typical budget up to £25,000 – which defines Nettlecombe. Within this category there are several levels – 5 and 6 being below the substantive range, levels 7 – 12 being at the substantive benchmark range, and levels 13 – 17 being above. It was decided the role was below the substantive range with only 4 meetings per year and a smaller budget, and agreed at SCP level 6, proposed by Marilyn Crothers and seconded by Liz Scott.

The Clerk’s salary for April to June 2022 will be calculated at the new level 6, as agreed.

The EMN Hall have increased the hire rates from £40 per year to £60 per year, which was challenged as a non-profit making service to the community, but to no avail. Another venue as an option was discussed and enquiries will be made. In the meantime we await the invoice for the retrospective period 2021 -22.

The Daren Grellier Garden Care invoice was approved for payment following the decision to keep the contract – Minute 5.

## **16. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The completed Annual Governance Statement was agreed, proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Marilyn Crothers and signed by the Finance Officer and Chairman.

## **17. ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2021 - 2022**

The Accounts for the year had been circulated prior to the meeting, showing a healthy balance in hand of £3615, to include the Garden Care invoice of £160. and were agreed proposed by Iain Mackie and seconded by Oliver Reynolds, and signed by the Chairman.

## **18. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS INFORMATION**

Nettlecombe Fete – Saturday May 28<sup>th</sup>

Queen’s Platinum Jubilee picnic at EMN Hall, Monksilver on Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon.

Parish Supper will be in November later this year at Nettlecombe Court.

**19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – MONDAY AUGUST 8<sup>TH</sup> AT 8.00 PM**

Monday August 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 at 8pm at the EMN Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm

Chair:.....

Date:.....