

MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on TUESDAY 9th MAY 2023 – 8.00 pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: There were no Residents present

DECLARATION OF INTEREST:
None declared

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Martin Dewdney

2. CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLORS

There were none appointed.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair: Iain Mackie chaired this part of the meeting as vice-chair. Iain Mackie proposed that Robin Wichard should be re-elected to the post, seconded by Oliver Reynolds. Robin Wichard accepted the post.

Vice-Chair: Iain Mackie was proposed by Robin Wichard and seconded by Oliver Reynolds.

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

*Iain Mackie advised that he would hold this post for just a further year then step down, but remain on the Council
It was agreed to find a person interested to shadow the Planning role over the next year to ensure continuity.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FORMS and REGISTER OF INTERESTS

To be circulated electronically 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. His quotation for 10 x cuts at £80 plus an annual one-off trim of the Ivy on Church wall at £100, was accepted by letter.

Yearly Charity Donations

It was agreed to support 1. Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, 2. Exmoor Search and Rescue and 3, The local Food bank, who will each receive £50, proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Robin Wichard.

6. SUMMARY REPORTS April 2022 – March 2023

Chairman's Report for the Year (as detailed in the Annual Parish Meeting)

The Chairman personally thanked all his fellow Councillors for their support and work behind the scenes over the past year to support the Parish. He thanked the Parish clerk, Carol Juffs, for working tirelessly to ensure we are all well prepared for each meeting and that the affairs of the council are always in impeccable order.

The Chairman also recorded his thanks, on behalf of the Council, to Ben Lintott who served the Parish for many years until recently when he moved out of the Parish, and subsequently retired from duty.

The past year has been relatively uneventful for the Parish. The Council has continued to be represented on the Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum (although the issues discussed rarely impact on Nettlecombe Parish given that we have few amenities and urban centres), and on the Flood Group. Despite numerous requests, the Dunster Panel has still not reconvened after Covid and this remains a serious loss to the Parish as the Panel served as an important conduit for communication and networking between Councils. Those responsible to the Panel seem unwilling to reconvene it, although we continue to push for it.

In previous years the Council has done much to try and alleviate the worst causes of flooding in the parish and continues to monitor drainage and potential issues. As a result of work previously undertaken there were no real issues during the recent inclement weather, although we cannot be complacent and will continue to monitor and react to potential threats.

Highways within the Parish continue to be a concern. As the size of vehicles increases, the damage to the banks similarly increases and this has been an issue through the year. We continually monitor this and report all such concerns to County Highways department along with the potholes. County has generally responded well.

There has been a steady flow of planning applications received but these have been largely uncontentious and only one site (just outside the Parish boundary, but impacting on neighbouring properties within the Parish) has required on-going monitoring and intervention together with several revisions to applications already made.

We continue to meet our obligations to mow the lawns around the Parish church, and prune the ivy on the church boundary wall, and have been able to negotiate a new contract to ensure that we continue to get good value for money.

On-going concerns within the Parish include access to fast broadband (or any in places) and the return of the post-box in Yarde. These are long-term issues but we continue to agitate in the hope that some improvement can be made.

We have recently seen the change to a Unitary Authority in Somerset and look forward to a successful working partnership with them in years to come.

Exmoor National Park Authority

The Chairman was unable to report on the ENPA as the Minutes from their last meeting are not currently available on the ENPA website.

Highways:

Marilyn Crothers reported that the Highways department had responded through the year to the several reports of potholes that needed repair. It is understood that potholes need to be a certain depth before repair is carried out but generally the response time has been 2/3 days following logging the case on the website. The bank has slipped on the road between Yarde and Woodford and although coned off, repair work has not been carried out yet. Cllr Lawrence suggested that she can help by escalating to David Carter in the Highways department if required.

Planning:

There have been a steady number of Planning Applications considered by the Councillors through the year. If anyone wants to check on the progress of any application, please refer to the website:

somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/planning-weekly-list/

More details of the current applications will be considered in 15 below.

Footpaths:

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

EMN Hall

In the absence of a regular report at recent meetings it was agreed to leave this off the Agenda in future and report any events to note.

7. DATES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS FROM MAY 2023 – MAY 2024

On the second Tuesday of every third month

Tuesday August 8th at 7.30

Tuesday November 7th at 7.30

Tuesday February 13th 2024 at 7.30

Tuesday May 14th 2024 Annual Parish Meeting 7.15 and 7.30 AGM

8. ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE

No matters were raised

9. MINUTES of the Meeting on February 6th 2023 (already circulated)

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting.

10. Police Report

Since the retirement of Sue Thompson, the reporting is carried out via an emailed newsletter sent out periodically, which is circulated to the Councillors. This will no longer appear as an item on the Agenda, unless the future Police staffing allows them to attend the meetings again.

11. Open Forum

There were no residents present to contribute to the meeting.

12. SOMERSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Cllr Christine Lawrence reported the new Unitary Council came into effect on 1st April 2023, replacing four district councils. Somerset Council has a single point of contact via telephone on 0300 123 2224 or via the website www.somerset.gov.uk

There is currently a significant projected overspend of £24.3m as at month 9 (latest figures available) which gives significant challenges delivering the new Somerset Council budget in light of this overspend to date. The main areas of social care are causing the greatest overspends.

The roll-out of the Spring booster Covid-19 plan has begun until the end of June.

Somerset Council is backing a major new campaign to support younger drivers and raise awareness of excessive speeding on rural roads. A quarter of incidents involving fatalities or serious injury are young drivers on Somerset's rural roads. More information on initiatives and courses can be found at www.somersetroadsafety.org

Somerset Council recently launched a three-month pilot project with Mobilise to help unpaid Carers get the support they are entitled to. It includes a range of on-line courses and support calls. The Mobilise service is free of charge for residents of Somerset and can be accessed via <https://support.mobilise.co.uk/somerset>

There is a new Housing support scheme helping people leaving hospital and returning to their own homes. An intermediate loan helps cut through the red tape while a Disabled Facilities grant application is processed. Help can include the loan of stair lifts, help for essential repairs to the home, including insulation, and help to make the home more dementia friendly. The new Council services can be accessed through www.someset.gov.uk

13. MATTERS OF REPORT from 6th February 2023 Meeting

There was nothing additional to add.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk had received confirmation that the Precept payment has been paid to the bank account

15. REPORTS

Chairman's Report

Covered in Minute 6 above.

Dunster Panel, ENPA

Nothing to report.

Highways

Nothing additional to report

Planning

Planning consent was given to the Car Port at Huish Barton farm with a condition that it was for domestic use only and not the storage of agricultural equipment. There had been constraints with the height of the adjacent boundary hedge but as this hedge is not owned by the applicant it was removed as a condition.

There is currently a planning application for consideration at Woodford 6/24/23/004 - 2 Woodford Cottages which is a retrospective application for the erection of a shed. Although of a lower ridge line it appears to be a substantially larger footprint at 24.6 metres, and was not replacing 'like for like'. It also has a kennel run for the housing of a number of working dogs which has the potential for noise disturbance to the cottages locally. A letter will be written to the Exmoor National Park Authority to object to this application on these two grounds.

A recent Planning Application re the Blade Mill had been dismissed but there had been no correspondence in relation to this.

Cllr Mackie attended a SALC course for Planning recently via Zoom, which was given by Justin Robinson. A very useful guidance on what is considered Material and not-Material when considering planning applications is set out below:

Material Planning Considerations

1. Local and Neighbourhood plans
2. Government circulars, statutory instruments or guidance
3. Previous planning applications/appeals relating to the site
4. Sustainability (e.g proximity to services and amenities)
5. Adverse effect on residential amenity of neighbouring properties (such as noise, disturbance, pollution, overlooking, loss of privacy)
6. Highways issues – including safety and parking
7. Visual impact of the development – is the development out of character?
8. Impact on listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments
9. Adverse effect on nature, biodiversity or trees
10. Layout and density
11. Design, appearance, materials and landscaping
12. Drainage and possible impact on flooding

Not material planning Considerations

1. Loss of view
2. Negative impact on property value
3. Land and boundary disputes
4. Private rights of access or covenants
5. Impact of Construction
6. Opposition to business competition
7. Opinions on, or past history of, the applicant
8. The reasons or motives of the applicant
9. Concerns about possible future development
10. Opposition to the principle of development if this has already been determined by an outline planning permission
11. Matters controlled under other non-planning legislation (e.g building regs.)

Footpaths

There was nothing significant to report and all footpaths are regularly walked and checked within the Parish.

Finance

Three payments were approved, proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Robin Wichard.
Clerk’s salary for April to June 2023 at £270.92 gross – noting that the tax had already been sent to HMRC.
Zurich Insurance renewal for 2023/4 at £167.44

Black Cat Computers £145 for website maintenance and the domain renewal

It was also agreed to send £50 to three charities – Exmoor Search and Rescue, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance and the local Food Bank.

15.6 Website upgrade provision

The Councillors agreed to proceed with the upgrade of the Parish website. Carol Juffs to liaise with David Sykes of Black Cat Computers to achieve a website along the guidelines proposed by Ben Lintott, before Covid lockdowns halted the project. Proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Caroline Moore

16. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

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

17. ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2022 - 2023

The Accounts for the year had been circulated prior to the meeting, showing a healthy balance in hand of £2633, and have just been audited locally. The Councillors had made an active decision to keep the precept the same and utilise some of the reserves that had built up to cover the expenditure over the year. There is still a budget of £750 to update the website held in reserve.

The Accounts 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 27th at 2.30 pm

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – TUESDAY AUGUST 8TH AT 7.30 PM

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Chair:.....

Date:.....