

MINUTES OF NETTLECOMBE PARISH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING At EMN HALL, MONKSILVER

TUESDAY 9TH MAY 2023 at 7.15 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Iain Mackie (Vice-Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Marilyn Crothers, Liz Scott, Caroline Moore
Somerset Cllr Christine Lawrence. Carol Juffs (Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE: There were no Residents present

Apologies for absence: Martin Dewdney and Cllr Marcus Kravis

1. **Welcome and report of the work of the Parish Council during the past year by Robin Wichard, the Parish Council Chairman**

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.

2. The Clerk's report on the finances of the Parish Council during 2022-23

We began the year with £3775 and ended the year with a balance in hand of £2633. The Councillors had made an active decision to keep the precept the same as in the previous year and utilise some of our reserves that had built up over time. Our expenditure was much as anticipated through the year except for the grounds maintenance contract, when more grass cuts were made than in previous years. The same was experienced by the PCC, and so a meeting was held in the autumn with Daren Grellier of Garden Care & Creation. The aim was to discuss how to make savings for the forthcoming season 23/24, without having to raise the precept requirements. This could be achieved by reducing the seasonal cuts to 10 in total and maintenance of the ditch bank near Woodford and the ivy on the church wall annually. The quotation for £900 for 23/24 was accepted by letter in November 2022.

There is an amount of at least £750 in reserve to update the website in the forthcoming year. It had been the Councillors' intention to carry out the update pre-Covid lockdown and then the project was placed on hold.

In the autumn the Councillors made a charitable donation of £100 to the local foodbank which was gratefully received in these times of rising costs across the nation. It is hoped to support this local charity in the future.

Three people received training from on-line courses run by SALC through the year, and we will continue to pay subscriptions to SALC to remain members.

3. Any other business

There were no further matters to discuss.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm.