

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD AT THE EMN HALL, MONKSILVER
On TUESDAY 13th AUGUST 2024 – 7.30 pm**

AGENDA

Present: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Iain Mackie, Marilyn Crothers, Liz Scott, and Shelagh Laver. In attendance Eileen Cole.

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from Justin Nichols, and Clerk – Carol Juffs

2. MINUTES of the Meeting Held on May 14th 2024

These were circulated prior to the Meeting and approved and signed as a true and accurate of the meeting.

The Minutes of the AGM of the Parish were also signed as an accurate record.

3. OPEN FORUM – FOR ALL RESIDENTS

There were no residents present at the meeting.

4. SOMERSET COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

The Councillors were unable to attend the meeting.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence other than a matter to be addressed separately by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS of REPORT

There were no further matters to report other than agenda items below.

7. REPORTS - CURRENT

Chairman's Report

RW

The Chairman has a real concern for the viability of the smaller Parish and at the end of last meeting we discussed some proposals like the potential to merge with another small Parish, However, that would not be appropriate with one like Monksilver, since they have little in common with Nettlecombe Parish. They are a small community without the extensive road systems and issues that we have, and therefore no real benefit to either Parish. The better solution is for a working collaborative between the smaller Parishes, and the Chairman has begun to explore this with other Chairmen informally at the moment, where the idea has been well received.

Intriguingly the local Press managed to report about this matter with detail not even contained in the Parish Minutes! The article was addressed by the Chairman of Monksilver, but he was assured that these had only been ideas muted regarding a way forward for small parishes to work collaboratively over similar issues, with shared interests.

As the County, now a Unitary Authority is in dire financial straits, they are trying to devolve costs down to the Parishes and have introduced a Highways Warden that can be hired by individual Parishes. But the question to ask is how does a small Parish, as Nettlecombe, afford this cost with the Precept that has already been increased this year to cover rising costs?

The money spent on specific projects in the past, like flood prevention, has been well spent as in recent years we have had no flood problems. But we no longer have reserves to address any major issues that may arise.

A higher proportion of the precept is now spent on admin and if we did join with other Parishes these costs could be trimmed. The costs of merging will also need to be considered by the communities and all residents consulted, which in itself is a lengthy process.

Local Community Network LCN and Highways sub-Division RW/MC

The Chairman has a real concern that smaller Parishes such as Nettlecombe are not well represented in the large LCN that covers the Minehead area. The Minutes of the LCN that has now celebrated 1 year since conception were circulated prior to the meeting.

The only real success has been the Highways work carried out by the LCN sub-division. Recently work has been carried out to improve Clitsome Lane satisfactorily with repairs to the major potholes. The response time to issues raised via their website has been very good.

Monksilver has made enquiries to Somerset Council about a 7.5 tonne weight restriction to be placed on the road through to Monksilver from Faircross. This arose after an articulated lorry followed satnav instructions and got stuck along this route. John Stace from Monksilver Parish, the Councillor with responsibility for Highways, contacted the Chairman about this proposal. The County Council response was that advisory signage warning HGV drivers of the weight limit ahead would need to be placed in a two mile radius, giving them the opportunity to select an alternative route. The estimate for this cost would be in the region of £3000, following a site inspection, and shared with the 3 parishes Elworthy, Monksilver and Nettlecombe.

It would make more sense for SALC, or even NALC to approach the IT companies producing these Satnav maps to show the route is unsuitable in the first place!

The concept of adopting the weight limit restriction and its cost implications was discussed at length. In principle the Parish Council did not agree to support adding a weight restriction limit to the road, at a cost to the community, because of the cluttering of signage in the neighbourhood. People do not take notice of signage generally, so how effective would additional signage be?

ENPA

RW

The Minutes have not been circulated from Exmoor National Park yet.

Highways

MC

Salt for the winter use -we are being asked by Somerset Council to request refills for saltbins. Our nearest salt bin is in Roadwater – which if we can reach that by road we wouldn't be needing the salt anyway!!

Footpaths

RW

Justin has cleared the headland around the field leading from Nettlecombe Court. He is happy for the footpath to be re-routed around the field at Egypt junction, as opposed to crossing it.

Planning

SL

Planning Consent was granted for Woodford Cottage above its garage with conditions that it is not used for primary accommodation, as we recommended, with no external lighting and that bat boxes were erected.

Berryman's cottage was given consent as it was in keeping with the surrounding area and in proportion to the property.

Work progresses slowly at the Blade Mill.

West Somerset Flood Group

JN

There was no report from the Group as they have not met recently.

At the previous meeting it was recommended to have a Local Flood Plan and although one does not physically exist there is an active strategy. The flood prevention needs maintaining as the years go by. There are forms recommended by WSFG for preparing a local flood plan which will be brought to the next meeting.

The residents at the top of Rocky Hill need to trim back the vegetation on the roadside. And this will be addressed in person by Marilyn Crothers.

Other Parish Matters

RW

The field adjacent to the right of Clitsome Lane below the Manor house, Beggearn Huish has not been tended through the year, and is overgrown which does not aid drainage in that area. The owners have been spoken to about the matter, but it may need a follow-up in writing.

The local Police Newsletter was recently circulated showing attendance at local fetes, but out and about in the community is not such an obvious presence.

1. Confirmation of approval re Accounts 2023/24 sent to Auditors PKF Littlejohn LLP

The confirmation of timely and safe receipt was received from PKF Littlejohn.

Note: Charity Donations will be reviewed at Year End, and not made this quarter, as agreed.

2. The following payment was agreed which had been sent since last meeting Auditor Debbie Dennis £25.00

The following invoices were approved for payment

Black Cat Computers website updates to date £50.00

Daren Grelier - Garden Care and Creation to end of July £300

E C Juffs Salary July – September GROSS £322.92 Tax to be paid by ECJ direct to HMRC

E C Juffs stationery totalling £41.20

SALC membership £56.75

8. CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR

Eileen Cole expressed an interest to become a Councillor but asked for time to consider the proposal.

9. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION

This Sunday there is an evening concert in the church from a local singing group if anyone is interested to pop in.

10. Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 12th November 2024 at 7.30 pm