

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD AT THE EMN HALL, MONKSILVER
On TUESDAY 12th NOVEMBER 2024 – 7.30 pm

Present: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Iain Mackie, Marilyn Crothers, Liz Scott, Justin Nichols and Shelagh Laver.

1. Apologies for Absence

Somerset Cllr Christine Lawrence

2. MINUTES of the Meeting Held on August 13th 2024

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

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

On the morning of the meeting a letter was received from the Leader of Somerset County Council -Cllr Bill Revans which was circulated to all the Councillors ahead of the meeting. In it he suggested that Councils should make provision in their budgets for a contingency to be able to take on any services that Somerset Council may not be able to continue, while Somerset works tirelessly to create financial stability.

The Chairman commented exactly how does a small Parish manage additional costs when barely being able to cope with our existing budget?

A letter needs to be written to Anne Farley in Roadwater, the field owner, below The Manor house in Beggearn Huish, regarding the overgrown state which is affecting the drainage.

An email was received from David at Black Cat Computers advising of the very sad news that he had recently lost his wife in tragic circumstances. The Councillors asked the Clerk to pass on their condolences and very best wishes to David Sykes.

6. MATTERS of REPORT

Shelagh Laver has researched alternatives to our mowing contract of the church yards and met with Lucy Devitt, PCC, to discuss Wilder Churches, and bio diversity etc. The Parochial Church Council would be interested in investigating further. Currently the contractor practices No Mow May and observes wide pathways., but certainly something to explore further.

The **Connecting Devon and Somerset** project has now been concluded which should have meant a rollout of Broadband to Yarde, in particular, which is very disappointing.

Smart Meters continue to be a problem with issues of connectivity as well.

7. **REPORTS - CURRENT**

Chairman's Report

RW

The saying that No News is Good News still applies in that there is nothing serious to report. Flood prevention works in the past have clearly worked as there is only seasonal leaf fall causing blockages locally, nothing major.

Our main concern remains the challenges faced by a small Parish to manage our rising costs, devolved pot-hole repairs and anything else that may come our way, according to Cllr Bill Rivens' letter, without a huge increase in our Precept requirements.

Local Community Network LCN and Highways sub-Division

RW/MC

The Chairman attended the recent meeting and still has a real concern that smaller Parishes such as Nettlecombe are not well represented in the large LCN that covers the Minehead area.

The Highways sub-group focused entirely on the coastal road from Watchet to Blue Anchor, and matters of coastal erosion etc.

There followed a lengthy talk on Health and Well-Being and what services Parishes can offer towards the mental health and well-being of Parishioners. Grants available with matched funding, but this really does not seem applicable to small Parishes, without even the benefit of a local Doctor.

ENPA

RW

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

Highways

MC

There was nothing to report from the recent meeting as yet, and it will be important to attend the local group meetings and understand what is expected of small Parishes. There continues to be concern as to what roads the Council will still be responsible for in the Parish, i.e the road to Raleigh's Cross.

Footpaths

RW

The paths locally remain in reasonable condition out of the growing season.

Planning

SL

There are no Planning Applications currently. The work at Berryman's Cottage is in progress, whereas the work at Woodford Cottages does not appear to have started yet. The Blade Mill continues to have work carried out very slowly on site.

It was agreed to write to the Planning department noting that the House Consent has expired at the field adjacent to the Manor House in Beggearn Huish. It was conditionally tied to the use of the Barn, and the requirement to have someone continuously on site for the livestock. It was agreed to write and ask exactly what the current situation is now that the Consent has expired, and there appears to be activity there.

West Somerset Flood Group

JN

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

Other Parish Matters

RW

No further matters to report.

Clerk - Finance

ECJ

The following invoices were approved for payment

SALC 4 historical invoices dated since 2021 previously paid but un-presented
£110.00

Black Cat Computers website updates to date £50.00

E C Juffs Salary Oct - Dec GROSS £322.92 Tax paid by ECJ direct to HMRC

(No invoice has been received from Garden Care and Maintenance to date)

Proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Iain Mackie

8. PARISH RECEIPT 2025/6

The Precept for 2024 - 2025 was £2,415 and the Councillors considered the increase to cover delegated Highways responsibilities and the potential need for 2 noticeboards, as well as rising costs for existing expenditure.

Committed expenditure:

Clerk's salary – currently £1291.68 **Budget £1331** (3% increase nationally)

IT contract and website – website hosting costs £95, Domain name renewal £45 annually, quarterly work to upload and update content budget £200. Proposed **Budget £340**

Subscription to SALC - £56.75 this year. Proposed **Budget £60**

Training budget - £200 spent this year – 4 x training courses attended by Councillors proposed **Budget reduced to £75**

Zurich Insurance renewal - £167.44 this year. proposed **Budget £175**

Mowing contract – contact Darren Grelier to leave Ivy on wall, and reduce cuts next year where possible Recommend increase due to fuel costs. Proposed **Budget £1000**

Charitable donations - £100 budget each year. But no payments to date, nor next year.

Audit – budget £30 – spent £25. Retain **Budget at £30**

Postage and stationery – spent £41.20 – retain **Budget at £45**

NB Contingency costs cannot be met from reserves as there will be little to carry forward from this year

Total Budget Requirement £3056,

The Councillors agreed a 10% increase on £2415 to £2656.

Finance Officer to check with SALC that the increase can be more than 5% -as in previous years. **ECJ**

There will be no option for Noticeboards that need replacement at Woodford and Yarde

NB The Highways responsibility delegated to Parish Councils – this remains a major concern as to how small Parishes are supposed to be able to afford this delegated cost and others that may occur in 2025.

POST MEETING Note: SALC has suggested that Parish Councils will need to increase their Precept requirement to cover delegated costs maybe as high as 50 – 100% but the Councillors agreed to remain at 10% this year.

9. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION

Nothing to report.

10. Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 11th February 2025 at 7.30 pm