

**HOLCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL  
IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET**

**[www.holcombepc.org.uk](http://www.holcombepc.org.uk)**

Clerk: Vickie Watts, Gallant Hill Farm, Foxcote, Radstock, BA3 5YB  
[clerk@holcombepc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@holcombepc.org.uk) 07971 516916 / 01479 880428

**Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Meeting, which took place on  
Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December at Holcombe Village Hall**

*Councillors Present*            Cllr Brand (Chairman)  
   Cllr Eade  
   Cllr Emery  
   Cllr Gait  
   Cllr Stratford

*In attendance:*                There was 1 member of the public present.  
   Clerk Vickie Watts taking the minutes.

**1. Public forum**

A member of the parish attended the meeting to discuss Holcombe village development processes and planning. The resident asked if the reactive processes currently used by Holcombe to respond to planning applications was an increasingly sub-optimal mechanism, unsuited to influence the development of the village in the modern age. He questioned whether the reactive mechanisms should form part of a more comprehensive and more nuanced strategy, and went on to give an example of a model from his own experience in Dorset.

It was suggested that a volunteer led group could be formed to work with decision makers like the Parish Council, Local Authorities, and potential developers to influence planning and development for the benefit of the parish. It was suggested that the group would enable a degree of flexibility that may not be appropriate or possible within the Parish Council.

The group would not duplicate or relegate the work of the Parish Council but could support the village in helping to ensure that development is necessary, desirable, and in the interests of villagers.

The Chair thanked the resident for bringing his suggestion to the meeting and agreed to give a response at the next meeting.

**Action: Agenda item for the next meeting**

**2. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Davies, Cllr Govier, Cllr Kerr, Cllr Roberts, Somerset Cllr Hobbs and Cllr Robbins sent apologies, which were accepted by the Chair.

**3. Declaration of interests and dispensations**

There were none.

**4. Co-option of Councillors**

All vacancies have now been filled.

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**5. Approve Minutes of previous monthly meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

The minutes had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Emery and seconded by Cllr Stratford that they accurately reflected the meeting and should be approved.

*Vote: 5 For; 0 Against; 0 Abstention*

**6. Action updates from last meeting**

All actions had been completed or would be covered as agenda items during the meeting.

**7. Reports**

7.1 PCSO – PCSO Will Mortimer emailed to say that he is currently covering the beat whilst PCSO Robert Nell is on leave. Crime statistics had been received and circulated to all Councillors.

7.2 Somerset Council – no report had been received.

**8. Asset & Service Devolution – opportunities for parishes**

There had been much correspondence from Somerset Council and meetings held regarding the current financial emergency. Extreme action will be required to balance the budget for 2024/25. Parishes have been invited to get in touch if there are assets or services that they may like to take on. After discussion it was agreed that the Clerk would write to say that Holcombe Parish Council would not be looking to take on any of the non-statutory services.

*Action: Clerk to write to Somerset Council.*

**9. Biodiversity Net Gain legislation (BNG) and consultation**

The Chair gave an update on the new Government Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation which is an approach to development and land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. It is intended to deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. This will start in January 2024 for major development of 10 or more dwellings or ½ hectare in area who must show BNG of 10%. Smaller developments of less than 10 will need to apply from April 2024. No further action is required.

**10. Planning Applications**

There were none.

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## 11. Planning Updates

2022/1618/FUL – Formation of new overflow car park with associated access and landscaping. Duke of Cumberland Inn, Edford Hill, Holcombe

The application had been approved at the Somerset Planning Committee meeting held earlier in the day, where the PC spoke in support of the application. Cllr Gait expressed concern that Somerset Cllr Edric Hobbs had wished to support the planning officer's decision to refuse the application and had it not been for the Chair of the Planning Committee who asked for the application to be referred to the Planning Committee due to the huge amount of local interest, it would have been refused.

In the past, if the Parish Council's decision was different to that of the Planning Officer the Ward Councillor would have spoken with the Parish Council to discuss whether the application should be approved/refused on the basis of the reasons given in the Planning Officers report; or be referred to the Planning committee for the decision to be made. It was agreed that Cllr Gait would draft a letter on behalf of the Parish Council questioning why this process was not put in place on this occasion.

***Action: Cllr Gait to draft a letter for the Clerk to send to Somerset Cllr Hobbs.***

## 12. Finance

### 12.1 Discuss Budget and Precept for 2024/25

The Clerk had shared the spreadsheet with a draft of the budget for 2024/25 for consideration. It was agreed that the Clerk would share the calculation showing how any percentage increase will impact on parishioners' council tax.

The deadline for submitting the precept to Somerset Council had been extended to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024. The decision on Holcombe precept will be made at the January meeting.

***Action: Clerk to share the calculations with Councillors. Agenda item for January***

### 12.2 Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk had prepared the bank reconciliation which was checked by Cllr Emery as being correct.

### 12.3 Consider quotes to install 3 x new toughened glass panels in the Lychgate

Only one quote had been received. It was agreed that further quotes were required and should include cost of installation for consideration at the January meeting.

***Action: Clerk to seek quotes. Agenda item for January***

### 12.4 Consider and agree the Clerks pay rate and back pay resulting from the Local Government services pay agreement for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The Clerk confirmed that the rate for SCP 26 had increased by £1.00 to £18.10p/h. Back pay was calculated at 172.25hours at £1.00. It was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Brand that the new rate and back pay should be approved.

***Vote: 5 For; 0 Against; 0 Abstention***

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12.5 Parish Council Payments

The following invoices were presented for payment:

Vickie Watts – Salary & Expenses	£ 315.44
Vickie Watts – Back pay	£ 171.75

12.6 Playing Field Payments:

There were none.

It was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Eade that the abovementioned payments for the Parish Council should be approved.

***Vote: 5 For; 0 Against; 0 Abstention***

### **13. Highways**

13.1 Update on installation Auto Speed Watch

Cllr Stratford reported that there had been issues with the ASW unit having suffered with a flat battery due to lack of sun. It has been suggested that an additional solar panel be purchased at a price of £98.00 which would solve the problem. Cllr Stratford proposed that the panel should be purchased which was agreed by all Councillors.

***Vote: 5 For; 0 Against; 0 Abstention***

The payment to be approved at the next meeting.

***Action: Cllr Stratford to order the panel. Payment of ASW solar panel to be an agenda item for the next meeting***

13.2 Update on existing issues already reported to Somerset Highways

There was nothing to report.

***Action: Clerk to follow up with Somerset Highways engineer on their response to extending the 30mph zone at the entrance to the village near the Farmshop.***

13.3 Report of new issues

There was nothing to report.

### **14. Councillor Reports/Updates including Highways, Playing Field, Village Hall, SALC, etc**

14.1 Village Hall: Cllr Emery attended the recent AGM. The current Chair, Helen James is standing down. It was noted that the inside of the hall will be decorated in January and a new Village Hall sign is being installed outside. The Hall is being well used.

14.2 Playing Field: Cllr Emery reported that £214 was raised at the Christmas Fair for the playing field. The Christmas Light Switch on was well attended despite the rain, with the Farmshop providing mince pies and mulled wine which was much appreciated.

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**15. How can Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) better serve our Council?**

**Discuss and respond to SALC.**

After discussion it was agreed that Holcombe Parish Council were satisfied with the training and advice service which SALC provides.

*Action: Clerk to notify SALC*

**16. Meetings/Training to attend**

11/01/24 time TBC – Local Community Network meeting @ SHAPE Mendip. Cllr Gait and/or Cllr Davies to attend.

**17. Correspondence**

28/11/23 – Email from a resident regarding Civil Contingency planning. The Chair confirmed that he had spoken with the resident who was pleased to hear that Holcombe had an Emergency Plan which was in the process of being updated. No further action required.

**18. Next meetings:**

Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 @ 7.30pm

The meeting finished at 21.23hrs