

HOLCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
MENDIP DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET

www.holcombepc.org.uk

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

****DRAFT** Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Meeting, which took place on
Tuesday 2nd May 2023 at Holcombe Village Hall**

Councillors Present Cllr Simon Brand (Chairman)
Cllr Phil Gait
Cllr Simon Eade
Cllr Helen Kerr
Cllr David Roberts
Cllr Jon Stratford

In attendance: The Clerk Vickie Watts taking the minutes
There were 87 members of the public.

1. Public forum

There were no points raised.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Elaine Emery, Somerset Cllr Edric Hobbs and Somerset Cllr Tony Robbins sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

4. Approve Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 4th April 2023

The Clerk had circulated the minutes prior to the meeting. Cllr Kerr proposed that they were an accurate record and should be approved which was seconded by Cllr Gait. The minutes were duly signed.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

Action: Clerk to post on the website

5. Action updates from the last meeting

All actions had been carried out or would be discussed later in the meeting as an agenda item apart from:

1. Cllr Gait had been successfully added to the bank mandate as the 4th signatory
2. The Clerk confirmed that the new signage for the car park gate would be discussed and agreed at the next Playing Field Committee meeting.

6. Co-option of Councillors

There are currently 2 Councillor vacancies which the Clerk will continue to promote

Action: Clerk to continue to advertise the vacancies

7. Reports

1. PCSO – No report had been received.
2. Somerset Council report – No report had been received.

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8. Planning Applications

8.1 2023/0488/FUL - Infill land with inert material following the removal of dead ash trees and forming new temporary vehicular access. Land At 366904 148861 Edford Hill Holcombe

Cllr Brand outlined the planning process, the role the Parish Council had within that process and how the meeting would be run. He then summarised the application and invited the applicant's agent the opportunity to add to the Chairmans precis which was declined however the agent did agree to answer questions through the Chairman.

Members of the public raised the following concerns:

- a) Why is there no report submitted to address the impact that removing such an established habitat would have on wildlife and woodland flora? The Agent responded by saying that this process was in its early stages and that a Biodiversity and Ecological report had been commissioned.
- b) How would this application benefit the village? The Agent said that advice had been sought from both the Forestry Commission and the Mendip District Council Tree Officer who had said that cutting down the Ash trees and removing them from the site would reduce the spread of disease and therefore would benefit the village.
- c) The loss of habitat for badgers, horseshoe bats, birds of prey, dormouse and other protected species is a concern. What mitigation is there for their protection? The Agent said that this would be investigated and would form part of the reports previously mentioned.
- d) The covering letter mentions consultation and advice from The Forestry Commission and the Mendip District Council Tree Officer but when a member of the public contacted them, they said they were unaware of the application. The Agent stated that he had written correspondence to support the statement.
- e) Why would you install a water pipe and back fill? Did the advice from Forestry Commission and Tree Officer support this action? The Agent said that they did.
- f) There is currently a scheme within our area about slowing the flow of water into our rivers. What have the environment agency said regarding the installation of a water pipe? The Agent said that this would be covered within the commissioned report.
- g) This stretch of land is an important wildlife corridor and the protected species such as Horseshoe bats, Birds of Prey and Dormouse must be considered.
- h) What sort of materials will be put into the land? Agent did not respond.
- i) This part of the village is already surrounded by large lorries regularly accessing Stowells and has an increased volume of pedestrians visiting the pub since the creation of the Farm shop. To remove a historic hedge to create a new entrance in this area would be disastrous for other drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. The Agent said that they are considering installing a footpath down the inside of the site to allow safe access to the bottom of the hill.
- j) The woodland is full of native bluebells which are a protected species and must be considered.
- k) Removing the trees, levelling the site and replanting trees will not replace what the current ancient woodland has to offer.

The Chairman thanked those present for the comments and invited the Councillors to consider the application.

After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Gait that the application should be refused on the basis that there is a lack of evidence supporting the application coupled with the fact that no assessments have been conducted that address the impact on the environment or the ecology of the area. The following material planning considerations are also relevant to the application:

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There will be a loss of trees
Loss of ecological habitats
The appearance of the village would alter (Design and appearance)
Access onto the highway would be a Health and Safety concern
Would generate additional traffic
Create noise and disturbance to residents
Affect the public visual amenity and
Potentially increase flood risk

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

8.2 2023/0611/FUL - The conversion of an existing garage & workshop to residential accommodation & additional hard standing area with drainage. Little Tynning, Charlton Road, Holcombe

All Councillors had considered the application prior to the meeting. Cllr Brand outlined the proposal and invited Councillors comments, of which there were none. It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Kerr that the application should be approved as there were no breaches of the material planning considerations.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

8.3 2023/0681/HSE - New timber garage. Flint House Common Lane Holcombe

All Councillors had considered the application prior to the meeting. The applicant attended the meeting and outlined the proposal. He said that a tree survey had been completed and they would be adhering to the recommendations made within the report. It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Gait that the application should be approved as there were no breaches of the material planning considerations.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

9. Planning Updates

There were none.

10. Finance

1. Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk had completed the bank reconciliation which will be checked by one of the Councillors prior to the next meetings.

2. Consider year-end accounts 2022/23

All Councillors had received a copy of the year accounts prior to the meeting. The Clerk confirmed that the total income for the year ending March 2023 was £17,190 and expenditure was £17,176. There were no specific questions or points to highlight and it was agreed that they were an accurate record.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

3. Review and Agree reserves

The Clerk explained that as the Councils reserves stood at £25,315.77, more than twice the precept, that there was a requirement to explain how the reserves were allocated. It was agreed that they should remain the same as last year, namely:

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Contingency reserve £ 9,000.00
Traffic calming £7,000.00
Village Hall emergency fund £2,000.00
Playing field emergency fund / improvements £2,000.00
Cemetery emergency fund / improvements £2,000.00
Balance of Climate grant £356.00
General reserve £2,959.77

The Clerk confirmed that 2 quotes had been received to complete the Orchard maintenance (remove weed and suppress with mulch) before the 1st June when the Somerset Councillor will be visiting to see how the Climate Emergency grant has been spent. It was agreed that the quote received from Jeremy Weare for £240 plus VAT would be accepted and would be funded from the balance of the Climate grant.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

4. Annual Audit – Agree resolution that Holcombe Parish Council meets the criteria for 2022/23 and wishes to be an exempt authority, not subject to the limited assurance review, for that year. Sign the Certificate of Exemption

The Clerk had circulated a copy of the Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2022/23 Part 2 prior to the meeting. The certificate was read out by the Clerk when it was confirmed that the Parish Council was able to certify itself as compliant and therefore exempt from having to undertake a limited assurance review. It was agreed that the Parish Council was eligible for exemption and the certificate of exemption was signed by the Chairman.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

The Clerk read through the statement made by the Internal Auditor who said that the Financial Risk document identifies that documents are kept at the Clerks private residence. He recommended that this should be reviewed in light of security from fire or theft and also from a GDPR perspective. He suggested storing the documents in a locked metal filing cabinet or similar (possibly at the Village Hall). Or consider moving document storage from paper to a form of electronic storage. It was agreed that the Clerk would start to store records electronically to reduce the risk.

Action: Clerk to commence with scanning finance documents with immediate effect.

5. Consider and approve section 1 of the Audit - Annual Governance statement 2022/23
The Clerk had circulated a copy of the annual governance statement to all Councillors prior to the meeting. The Clerk read through questions 1 to 9 with the Councillors answering yes to all apart from question 9 which was not applicable. It was agreed that the statement should be signed by the Chairman.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

6. Consider and approve section 2 of the Audit - Accounting statements 2022/23
A copy of the completed accounting statement which had been signed by the Clerk had been sent to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the statement should be signed by the Chairman.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

7. Consider purchasing signage to protect Toads from crossing on Dark Lane.
The councillors considered this issue but agreed that purchasing signage would not represent good value for money therefore concluded that no further action would be taken.

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8. Parish Council Payments:

| | |
|--|----------|
| V Watts – Salary £496.66 and Expenses £31.90 | £528.56 |
| N Power – Lychgate electricity | £ 71.90 |
| Coronation celebrations – to Gala Account | £1000.00 |
| Approved as part of the budget process at the start of the year. | |

It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Kerr that the invoices should be paid.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions

9. Playing Field Payments

There were none.

14. Highways

1. Update on installation of Speed indicator device (SID)

All Councillors agreed that the SID was not performing as expected and the Clerk should ask the supplier to arrange for it to be collected.

Action: Clerk to arrange for collection by the supplier

2. Discuss and agree potential new sites for the SID to be installed on Brewery Lane, Stratton Road, Charlton Road and the top Of Holcombe Hill.

It was agreed that this would not be progressed at this stage.

3. Consider whether to purchase Auto Speed Watch.

All Councillors had received the information relating to Auto Speed Watch which is now being used by parishes with the support of Avon and Somerset police. There were some questions regarding the security and whether the unit could be moved to various locations. It was agreed that the Clerk would speak with the supplier and report back to Councillors with a view to further discussion at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to seek more information from ASW. Agenda item for the June meeting

4. Update on existing issues already reported to Somerset Highways

No update had been received. It was agreed that due to the urgent nature of the request, the Clerk would follow up Somerset Highway Engineer and Somerset Councillors to establish when the white lining at the main cross roads would be completed.

Action: Clerk to progress

5. Report of new issues

There were none.

15. Councillor Reports/Updates including Playing Field, Village Hall, and SALC, etc

There were no reports.

16. Meetings/Training to attend

29/04/23 from 10 until 3pm Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) AGM – Cancelled and to be held on another date.

08/05/23 from 10 until 12 noon - Litter pick with refreshments served in the hall after the event.

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17. Correspondence

An email dated 30 Apr was received from a resident enquiring whether the chairman had received a response from Somerset Council regarding his letter of 13 March related to Cookswood. The clerk stated that she had discussed this email with the chairman and that a response had been sent to the resident who acknowledged receipt.

Countryside Charity – Newsletter – Cllr Gait to read and pass on to Cllr Brand.

Citizen Advice Mendip – Email received 18/04/23 thanking the Council for the donation of £500

18. Next meetings:

Annual Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 9th May 2023 @ 7.30pm

Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 6th June 2023 @ 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 21.45hrs