

**HOLCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MENDIP DISTRICT OF 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) 01749 880428 / 07971 516916

**Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Meeting, which took place on  
Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at Holcombe Village Hall**

*Councillors Present*      Cllr Brand (Chair)  
                                 Cllr Davies  
                                 Cllr Eade  
                                 Cllr Emery  
                                 Cllr Gait  
                                 Cllr Govier  
                                 Cllr Kerr  
                                 Cllr Roberts  
                                 Cllr Stratford

*In attendance:*                      5 members of the public present.  
   Clerk Vickie Watts taking the minutes.

**1. Public forum**

Members of the public attended and raised concern over the new entrance created at Edford, on Holcombe Hill. They had contacted the Somerset Councillor and Planning Enforcement about their concerns but had not heard back. The Clerk said that a letter had been sent to the enforcement officer stating that it should be dealt with as a separate issue to that of the infill application and had received a response highlighting the staff changes within the department but confirming it would be addressed in due course.

It was noted that a Biodiversity report was now on the planning website which was informative and positive. The member of the public asked if there was anything that the Parish Council could do at this stage to protect the trees in the area? Somerset Wildlife Trust and Natural England are both aware of the application and following its progress.

It was agreed that the details of the application would be sent to Cllr Hobbs who was encouraged to refer to the Planning Committee.

Cllr Brand stated that the Council would report back when any information has been received.

*Action: Clerk to send application details to Cllr Hobbs*

**2. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies.

**3. Declaration of interests and dispensations**

Cllr Emery declared an interest in agenda item 10.2

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**4. Approve Minutes of previous monthly meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

The minutes had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Kerr and seconded by Cllr Emery that they accurately reflected the meeting and should be approved and signed by Cllr Davies who chaired the meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> May.

*Vote: 8 For; 0 Against; 1 Abstention*

**5. Action updates from last meeting**

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

**6. Reports**

- 6.1 PCSO – The last report received covered April. Drop-in sessions had been held at the Farmshop which were welcome. The Clerk to obtain future dates and help to promote.

*Action: Clerk to seek future drop in dates from the PCSO*

- 6.2 Somerset Council – Somerset Cllr Edric Hobbs attended the meeting. The following report had been shared by email to all Councillors:

Somerset Council has been in existence in its current form for just over a year. To mark this, the administration has prepared a list of “first year achievements”. This is a very informative list, which highlights the fact that whilst the financial situation has dominated much of the work over the past few months, there have been other significant achievements. That document is submitted alongside this report.

Annual General Meeting - At the second Annual General Meeting of Somerset Council, Cllr Mike Best (Crewkerne) and Cllr Lee Baker (Taunton North) were elected as Chair and Vice Chair of the Council respectively.

Cllr Bill Revans remains leader of the Council and the rest of the Executive remains unchanged. Minor changes have been made to committee appointments across the council. Following the resignation of Cllr Alex Wiltshire (Liberal Democrat), Cllr Rob Reed (Liberal Democrat) was elected in a by-election to represent Mendip South. Cllr Reed takes up Cllr Wiltshire seat on the Area East planning committee – Cllr Nick Cottle and Edric Hobbs remain as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

Transformation - The Council’s voluntary redundancy program – part of a suite of interventions intended to reduce the Council’s wage bill by £40m has seen 201 applications for voluntary redundancy granted (out of 372). These redundancies should reduce the budget by £8.204m in 2025/6 – leaving £27.158m yet to be found.

The Council is currently undertaking an internal consultation on the tier 2-3 (Executive Director and Service Director) restructuring – this envisages a reduction from seven to four Executive Directors and reducing the number of Service Directors from 22 to 15. Consultations on the restructuring of the Council below this level will start in June/July. It is intended that this

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restructuring will reduce the number of tiers within Somerset Council to six, from Chief Executive (tier 1) to front-line staff (tier 6).

It is important to note that voluntary and compulsory redundancies are not the only areas of search for this £40m saving – deleting vacant posts and reducing spend on agency staff are also key areas where savings are envisaged.

Further work continues to drive efficiencies within the organisation via both innovation and devolution/partnership working,

Glastonbury Road Wells roadworks - Work by Wales and West Utilities to replace the gas pipes across disruptive. It had been planned that the next phase of this work would involve turning the section of Glastonbury Road immediately off the Tinknell's roundabout one way (heading in to Wells only) from 28<sup>th</sup> May – 16<sup>th</sup> June. Following serious concerns about the impact of this approach (not least given its overlap with exam season) this work has been postponed. We will be meeting with Somerset Council officers next week to seek greater clarity on the rationale for undertaking this work in this way and the possible alternatives and/or mitigations.

Roadworks under temporary traffic lights - Frustratingly, work continues to need to be done under temporary traffic lights in a number of areas around Wells. Whenever this is happening the permit number for the work and the emergency contact number must be clearly displayed (in case anything goes wrong, e.g. the lights fail). If the lights do fail, please report them via the emergency phone number displayed on the site. Please also report these incidents to us. Please also report any incidents where the correct information is not displayed (especially live incidents).

**7. Planning Applications**

2021/0029/FUL – Erection of chalet bungalow following demolition of swimming pool and decking. Southwood, Common Lane, Holcombe.

The architect for the applicant attended the meeting and outlined the proposal. There was one objection on the Planning website which raised concern over a bund of topsoil on site. This had subsequently been resolved by the applicant who had explained that this was a temporary measure which would be removed once the project was completed.

After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Gait that the application should be recommended for approval.

***Vote: 9 For; 0 Against; 0 Abstention***

***Action: Clerk to notify the planning officer***

**8. Planning Updates**

There were none.

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**9. Consider proposal from the Planning Development Working Group for a Neighbourhood Plan**

A draft proposal had been prepared by Mr Durkin which had been shared with all Councillors prior to the meeting. The paper seeks support from the Parish Council (PC) in initiating a 'Neighbourhood Plan' (NP). Neighbourhood Planning is the most effective means now available for local people to influence planning outcomes. There are 2 options available:

1. (Recommended) Holcombe to seek to produce a joint NP in collaboration with the parishes of Stoke St. Michael and/or Coleford
2. Holcombe to produce a NP in isolation.

Though early, the initial responses from Coleford and Stoke St Michael are positive. The NP meets the objectives outlined in the earlier paper supported by Parish Council. That is, the NP provides a proactive mechanism by which parishioners can influence the development of their surroundings.

There will be costs incurred to produce the NP e.g.: specialist support, publication, and administration (web hosting etc). Funding of up to £10k (or £18k, for a three-parish collaborative plan) has been available, though in fy23-24, this had been exhausted by late January 2024. The PC should budget an additional £10k (possibly less if a collaboration is achieved) over the 2-year period.

After discussion it was agreed that Holcombe Parish Council supports the initiative but are not committing financially at this stage.

The PDWG will proceed with the following actions and report back to the Parish Council:

1. Engage more formally with the other PC's, seek commitment and agree approach.
2. Reinforce the Holcombe team. Noting that if a collaborative approach is agreeable to other parishes, then representatives need to be sought from these areas.
3. Increase local engagement publicising the initiative. Maintain this engagement.
4. Continue researching the Neighbourhood Planning Process.
5. Engage with Somerset Council Planners.
6. Develop a draft project plan, and identify and determine team roles.

**10. Finance**

10.1 Bank Reconciliation

This would be checked by Cllr Emery at the end of the meeting

10.2 Parish Council Payments:

The following invoices were presented for payment:

Vickie Watts – Salary & Expenses	£436.76
Elaine Emery – Floral Gateway	£ 20.40
One Stop Promotions – Union Flag	£159.06
SALC – Councillor refresh training	£ 25.00



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**14. Correspondence**

The following emails had been received:

Curtis Ilott – Query regarding the inscription on the obelisk for Jubilee Garden.

*Action: Cllr Brand to contact direct to progress*

Memorial Application from Exclusive Memorials – All Councillors agreed the design and inscription.

*Action: Clerk to notify the applicant of the decision*

**15. Next meetings**

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 Parish Council meeting

There will be no meeting in August

The meeting finished at 21.05 hrs