

WITHYPOOL AND HAWKRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL Draft Minutes
Tuesday 8th March 2022 6.30pm at Hawkridge Village Hall

Present: Parish Councillors: A Howard – AH (Chair), K Branfield - KB, A Collins - AC, T Lloyd - TL, P Soltau - PS, W Lock - WL; **SW&T Cllr** S Pugsley – SP (for part of meeting); **SCC Cllr** F Nicholson (for part of meeting) – FN; **Clerk** R Tomalin; **Public** – two

Abbreviations: ENPA – Exmoor National Park; SW&T - Somerset West and Taunton District Council; SCC – Somerset County Council;

For any Road defects – please go to the SCC Road Defect Website - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>

18/22 Questions from the public – none.

The meeting started at 6.32pm.

19/22 Apologies of Absence – none

20/22 Declarations of notifiable interests: None

WL joined the meeting at 6.34pm.

21/22 Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting on 11/01/2022 - proposed by TL and 2nd by AC and all Approved. Chair then signed the minutes.

22/22 Matters arising from the Minutes of 11/01/2022: AC & Chair have both fixed the gate at the Sandyway cattle grid. The parish garden hedge by the village hall car park has now been trimmed.

23/22 Councillor Vacancy: Chair reported that he had spoken to a couple of people about the councillor vacancy. All Cllrs agreed, with the upcoming election in May, it would be better to wait for that process.

24/22 May Election Process: The Clerk explained that the election nomination forms were available and needed to be completed and hand delivered by 4pm on 5th April. Completed forms can be dropped off at the village shop or the Clerk's home and she will take them all (if Cllrs so wish). The Cllrs discussed the cost of an election (approx. £1500) and agreed it would be more prudent for some Cllrs to withdraw if there were more nominations than seats. **Action:** Clerk to check timetable with Electoral Services to see if nominations can be withdrawn after the list of candidates is published. Clerk noted that SALC is holding a Prospective Councillor Training session on 21 March for any interested candidates.

25/22 Report by the County & District Councillors: as neither Cllrs were in attendance this was discussed later in the meeting

26/22 Broadband Scheme – PC acting as Guarantor: Julian Soltau (JS) represented the Broadband Committee and explained that the names & addresses of all interested households were submitted at the end of January. Openreach has 28 working days to reply with a quotation; as yet nothing has been received. If the quote is substantially higher than the voucher pot then a re-think may be required which could include looking at alternative funding, reducing the overall scope, removing specific properties or villagers funding the shortfall. If there is a gap in funding a Guarantor would

need to be found to guarantee the funding gap, although a guarantee has never been triggered as either the vouchers have covered the scheme or another solution has been found to bridge the gap. Clerk raised whether the PC had the power to act as guarantor, JS explained that Matt Barrow from Connecting Devon & Somerset had advised PCs have done this in the past. **Action:** Clerk to enquire with SALC whether W&H PC has the power to act as guarantor. The Cllrs decided to discuss further at the next PC meeting when the funding gap (if any) is known and it is clear whether the PC has the power to act as guarantor. The PC would also need to take legal advice which would incur costs. WL thanked the Broadband Committee for their time and effort in sourcing a workable solution for the parish.

27/22 Highways: (i) The Clerk drew attention to the recent note issued to Cllrs, posted on the noticeboard and FB about upcoming temporary road closures (ii) Cllrs reported that the blocked drains towards Willingford and Slade Bridge cattle grid had not been cleared (iii) on a more positive note the tree in the river had finally been removed (iv) pot holes in the road past the Sportsmans towards Kinsford Gate need to be reported (v) AC noted that road closure signs were left out long after the work had been completed. **Action:** Clerk to report old and new issues on Highways website

28/22 Finance report: (i) Bank Reconciliation £9,638.66 no changes since January meeting, however the rent for Plot C was due on 1st March and had not yet been received **Action:** Clerk to send tenants a reminder email (ii) Approval of Invoices: Clerks Pay and Exp Dec 21-Feb 22 **R Tomalin £293.91 Chq 541**; PAYE due to **HMRC £66.20 Chq 540**; **Hawkridge Village Hall** Hire for PC Meetings Jul 21 – Mar 22 **£45.00 Chq 542**; **Withypool Village Hall** Hire for PC Meetings May 21 – Jan 22 **£50.00 Chq 543**; **Withypool Village Hall** Hire Aug 21 Public Broadband Meeting **£20.00 Chq 544**; ESET AntiVirus Software Renewal for 3 Years (to be paid by card & reimbursed to Clerk) **R Tomalin £53.47 Chq 545** – all AGREED, Clerk will organise signing of cheques (iii) Year End Auditor – Clerk explained that the financial year end was fast approaching and it was time to think about the audit; all Cllrs agreed to ask Lyn Fisher if she would be prepared to audit the accounts again **Action:** Clerk to email Lyn Fisher about year-end audit (iv) NALC Pay Scales – Chair noted that the 2021-22 pay scales for clerks had finally been agreed. While the Clerk was entitled to backpay she had declined it, however going forward the clerks pay would now be £10.39/hr plus 89p/hr working from home allowance (an increase of 20p/hr).

29/22 Planning: 6/40/22/102 River Barle (Easting 285773, Northing 133879), Below Great Bradley, Withypool, Minehead, Somerset Application under Regulation 3 of The Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for proposed construction of footbridge

The Cllrs unanimously supported the application. They all thought it was a good idea to have another crossing over the river and could see the benefits for walkers, horses, mountain bikers and visitors, as well as protecting wildlife and the landscape.

SW&T Cllr SP joined the meeting at 7.07pm and JS left at 7.08pm during the Planning discussion under **29/22**

30/22 Parish Gardens: (i) Interest in purchasing Plot E (opposite village hall) for Self Build – the PC has been asked whether they would be interested in selling the parish garden for a self build project. The Cllrs discussed and agreed that if the PC were to consider selling the land it should be for 3-4 properties as proposed in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and should be for local people. There are some access issues which would need to be sorted out as the parish garden is currently accessed through the village hall car park; exact ownership of the car park is unclear. **Action:** Clerk to check whether land used as car park has been gifted to the village hall.

SCC Cllr FN joined the meeting at 7.23pm.

31/22 Parish Maintenance: (i) Grass Cutting Quotes – Clerk reported that Dan Passmore had submitted a quote of £620 to cut all grass areas on a regular basis, cut the beech hedge next to the car park and spray off weeds. Grass cutting normally runs March to October but if an extra cut was needed in November there would be no extra charges. Last year the PC paid £600 – all Cllrs agreed to accept the quote.

25/22 Report by the County & District Councillors: (i) FN reported that following Storm Eunice and the extra work created, the Highways contractor would not be able to clear the drains up past the High Street in Hawkridge. Further drainage issues were discussed including Colland Cross (outflow buried when road was resurfaced), Slade Bridge cattle grid and Willingford Bridge. **Action:** Clerk to send Highways Report numbers to FN. (ii) Highways LCN Pilot – a Highways Steward will be appointed at Highways expense. This person will check the local roads, unblock drains etc. across all the parishes, similar to what the Lengthsman used to do. Discussions continue whether one or two people will be needed; probably just one once everything has been brought up-to-date. There will be a higher level for strategic decision making to set priorities, and a meeting once a quarter with the contractor to plan works and agree road closures/diversions in the coming quarter. Exmoor is a big area of the new unitary council but only has 1% of the population; there are likely to be 20 LCNs across the whole of Somerset. It remains to be seen whether Exmoor will be one of the LCNs or whether it will be put with say, Minehead; under such an outcome community interest may be lost. (iii) Recycling – the new scheme is working well despite a few teething issues. Any problems to be reported to SP who will pass onto Somerset Waste Partnership (who have been generally very helpful and organised).

32/22 Chairman's Notices: none

33/22 Correspondence: Clerk reported she had received many emails about Jubilee events and commemorative memorabilia. There is an initiative to Plant a Tree for the Jubilee. The Cllrs discussed and requested the email was sent onto the Jubilee Celebration Committees. **Action:** Clerk to forward email to Jubilee Celebration Committees.

34/22 Report from representatives of other groups:

- Withypool Village Hall – looking at buying a new cooker and fridge, getting electric in the new shed and installing a motion sensor light. Jubilee celebrations fundraiser held in the hall recently and another is due soon. PS passes on thanks from the Withypool Jubilee Celebrations Committee for the donation of the hall for the next fundraising event
- Hawkridge Village Hall – planning to paint the guttering and outside of the hall as well as address a few issues in the kitchen.
- Henry Leigh Trust – approx. £2000 gifted in recent application round, covering swimming, driving, books, laptops, music & singing lessons. It is very good for young local people but the constitution will need to be reviewed following the May elections as the list of trustees includes one from SCC which will be replaced by the unitary council.
- Exmoor Panel – meeting on Thurs at Moorland Hall. The last meeting in January included a very interesting talk from the Police Crime Commissioner who seemed genuinely concerned about rural areas and suggested he would attend annually to give an update and hear views.
- Consultative & Parish Forum – next meeting will be 17th March 22 which will include a discussion on the response to the government consultation on the Glover review.

35/22 Parish Community including the social media page update, events by other groups not listed in 89/21: (i) Queens Jubilee celebrations – PS reported the Withypool Jubilee Celebration Committee has met 2 or 3 times to discuss events. There will be a lighting of the beacon on Withypool Hill with a BBQ on Thurs 2nd June, this is being led by KB. There will also be a flower festival in the church over the long weekend. On Sun 5th June a street party style lunch will take place in the Jubilee gardens/Coronation field; the village is lucky to benefit from a wealth of culinary talents. The Committee and Royal Oak pub are keeping each other informed so that parishioners can partake in many superb events. There will be fundraising activities before the celebrations, including a quiz and coffee morning; the clothes swap party a few weeks ago was well attended and raised a considerable sum. In Hawkridge there will also be a lighting of the beacon event on Thurs evening with an afternoon tea on Sunday followed by a service in church. It has been acknowledged that parishioners may wish to attend celebrations in both villages as we are one parish, so the organisers are keen to make sure events do not clash. The Cllrs discussed making a donation to both committees; the Clerk confirmed that a donation of £200 each had been given for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012. KB proposed the PC donates £250 to each Jubilee Celebration Committee; all Cllrs agreed. **Action:** Clerk to organise cheques (Chq Nos to be minuted in Finance Report of May meeting).

36/22 Items for May 2022 agenda: PC acting as Guarantor for Broadband Scheme, Audit, Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, GDPR, Aims & Objectives. The May meeting will include the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

37/22 Date and time of next meeting: due to the May elections the meeting will take place a week later on 17th May at 7.30pm at Withypool Village Hall.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.15pm

Signed.....Date.....