

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

In line with government guidance, recommended social distancing and self-isolation rules for those who are vulnerable during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was agreed that from June 2020, meetings would be conducted virtually. This has been achieved using “Zoom” software.

Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Virtual Meeting, which took place on
Tuesday 2nd March 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Councillors Present Cllr Peter Jennings (Acting Chair)
 Cllr Simon Brand
 Cllr Terry Dumbrell (Part)
 Cllr Philip Gait
 Cllr Anne Golledge (Part)
 Cllr Sue Robinson

In attendance District Cllrs Philip Ham and Alan Townsend, County Cllr Mike Pullin and the Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes. There were no members of the public present.

1. PUBLIC FORUM

The Clerk read out an email received on 3rd March from a young resident who with the help of her sister had picked up around 100 used plastic dog waste bags; which had been found hung or thrown into the hedges along a specific footpath in the village. The resident was most concerned about the impact that the plastic waste was having on the wildlife in the village and asked if the Parish Council could erect a sign to try to reduce this from happening.

ACTION: Clerk to write to the Parishioner to ask permission to use some of the content of her email in On the Map, Facebook and Website to encourage all dog owners to dispose of their dog waste in the correct manner.

2. CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLORS

The Clerk confirmed that there was no one to co-opt at this point.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Graham Crowe sent his apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

5. APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Clerk had circulated the minutes resulting from the meeting held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021. It was proposed by Cllr Golledge and seconded by Cllr Dumbrell that the minutes accurately reflected the meeting and should therefore be signed by the Chair

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

ACTION: Clerk to upload to the website

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6. ACTION POINTS FROM LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

All actions had been completed or would be discussed under the relevant agenda item later in the meeting apart from:

1. The Clerk had received the risk assessment and traffic management plan from Isaac Gregory which are to be approved prior to the tree work taking place. It was agreed that Cllr Gait and the Clerk would consider them to ensure all aspects are covered

ACTION: The Clerk to forward the documents by email to Cllr Gait

2. District Cllr Ham and Townsend had received notice from the Planning Officer that they were recommending approval of application 2020/1950/VRC Plot rear of Sunnyholm, Charlton Road, Holcombe. The Clerk had circulated an email to all Councillors inviting them to consider the Planning Officers report and decide whether they felt it should be referred to the Planning Board or on refraction whether it should be approved. Cllr Brand and Cllr Gollidge responded and with these comments in mind the District Councillors said that the issues were marginal and they therefore did not request that the application be referred to the planning board.

9. REPORTS

- 9.1 PCSO - An area newsletter had been circulated to all Councillors but it did not give specific information relating to Holcombe.

- 9.2 Mendip District Council report

District Cllr Townsend and Ham submitted the following joint report:

PLANNING - The 6 week Consultation was launched on 9th Feb on the Amended Main Modifications to the Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2). These cover two issues only, the requirement to take mitigation measures on development is likely to release Phosphates onto the Levels, and the removal of one proposed site in Rode. This further progress on LPP2 gives grounds for optimism that the current applications outside the newly defined development limits could be refused on planning policy grounds alone. However, the 17-2-21 Planning Board did approve an application for 6 dwellings at Writhlington outside development limits and the Board, encouraged by Mendip's lawyer, did not take on board that significant weighting may now be given to the Emerging LPP2 because of its advanced progress. District Cllr Townsend had been advised that the repeat application for 63 houses in Coleford will come before the 17th March Planning Board

FULL COUNCIL 22.02.21 - Mendip's year end budget deficit is now forecast at £1.4m which will be funded from reserves. The Finance Officer has produced a balanced budget next year which will result in a £5 a month or 3.1% rise for a Band D property. This was approved by Full Council. Little progress has been made on the capital investment programme which is required to provide an income to maintain services for future years. It was confirmed that all Mendip employees will receive at least the National Living Wage.

A new Arts for All fund of £40k has been agreed, through savings in the Mendip District Council travel budget. It was agreed Mendip should submit a proposal to Government for us to trial a Universal Basic Income.

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It was confirmed that the County Council elections scheduled for May 2021 will be postponed for a year to allow the Unitary proposals to be concluded.

MARKETS - Mendip District Council succumbed to the massive pressure from Frome Town Council in particular to open the Frome and Wells markets on Saturdays. The press release talks about Monday markets, we have yet to track these down.

HIGHWAYS - At the Zoom meeting with Sara Davis of Somerset Highways we discussed the issue of HGVs on Whitehole Hill, particularly the hazards for leisure users. Horse warning signs require evidence of significant usage. SLOW and Road Narrows signs at the bridge are a possible option. In line with our discussions with neighbouring parish councils last year, the option of closing the Hill to HGVs would only result in more traffic through Coleford, Holcombe, Leigh and Stoke. Separately concern has been raised with Highways about the poor state of the Stoke Bottom lane, including potholes and flooding. The Duck warning signs are now installed on Charlton Rd.

CABINET 01.03.21 - Mendip District Council reviewed a comprehensive proposal for the Multi User Path strategy. This aims to produce safe pathways between all major centres in the District and complete the Somerset Circular Route. The Strawberry Line and Frome Missing Link are important sections. Landowner issues are critical.

Cabinet also noted that the barriers on Gypsy Lane, Frome have now been removed, opening the door to a revival of the previous gross fly tipping activities. MDC incurred clean-up costs of over £50k in the past. A new strategy has yet to emerge.

Cllr Gait asked about the balanced budget for 2021/22 and whether the reserves would be helping to balance the budget. Cllr Townsend confirmed that it would be.

9.2 Somerset County Council report

County Cllr Mike Pullin reported that County Council elections have been postponed for a year based on the Unitary discussion. This is a decision by the Secretary of State who believes that it would be a waste of time and money to go ahead with them, as the situation could change based on the outcome of the Unitary decision.

Cllr Dumbrell asked how the Council can justify the cost of consultants over unitary. County Cllr Pullin said that there is an annual saving of £20million pounds to be made if Unitary goes ahead. He went on to encourage everyone to look at the website which explains how savings can be made and for anyone with questions or concerns to write to their MP or Leader of Somerset County Council Mr Fothergill during the consultation period. He went on to say that a Financial report has just been issued which outlines how investment would be made, including financial support for those businesses affected by the coronavirus.

Cllr Ham joined the meeting at 19.53hrs

The Coronavirus infection rate and hospital admissions are down across the County. Cllr Pullin asked Councillors to spread the word that if anyone over the age of 60 had not yet received their vaccine, then they should go online and book it.

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The Chair agreed to bring forward the Highway agenda items namely:

13.1 Discuss issues relating to large lorries accessing Edford Green and
13.2 Damage to land and property on Charlton Road

County Cllr Pullin said that he was aware from the recent email communication that there was a concern from parishioners regarding the size of HGV lorries accessing the village. Damage has been caused to 2 x walls, a telegraph pole and verges on Charlton Road in the last couple of months.

The Clerk said that an email had been received from a resident who had lived at Edford Green for the last 30 years who had noted that the lorries accessing the site are now very large. Damage has occurred to car wing mirrors, walls and the road surface. It is often not known who has done the damage and so it is therefore not possible to report back specifics to Stowells.

County Cllr Pullin said that speaking with the businesses regarding a travel plan may help.

Cllr Brand stated that the lorries have a right to use the roads to access the businesses in and around the village. He went on to say that communication and perception is a problem within the parish. As a Parish Council we have no power to do anything other than lobby Somerset County Council or write to the businesses. This needs to be made clear to Parishioners but also inform them of any response received from the businesses or Somerset highways so that they are aware that the Parish has done what they agreed to do.

Agenda item 13.4 Consider request from St Cuthbert (Out) PC to support their request to the SCC to make vital improvements to the Old Frome Rd and A37 junction.

An email had been received from St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council asking neighbouring Parish Councils to support their request to the County Council to make vital improvements to the Old Frome Road and A37 junction. Beacon Hill Crossroads and the Old Wells to Frome Road were subject to a small improvement scheme (ref T1004332 and T1004311) which has seen improved signage and road markings. It is acknowledged that this junction is an issue and many believe that the installation of a roundabout would address the problems. County Cllr Pullin and District Cllr Ham have spent the last couple of years trying to find a solution and at one-point local quarries and haulage companies met to discuss whether they would be prepared to help fund improvements but that was not successful. County Cllr Mike Pullin said that SCC are currently trying to get funding from central government to cover the cost of this type of scheme.

It was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Dumbrell that Holcombe Parish Council would support the request.

Vote: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

Action: The Clerk to notify St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council that Holcombe Parish Council supports their request.

Cllr Pullin left the meeting at 20.13hrs

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Agenda item 13.3 Consideration of data provided by Somerset Highways

Cllr Dumbrell confirmed that he had not had time to consider the most recent data provided by Somerset Highways due to work commitments. Cllr Brand asked how the data might help the village?

Cllr Dumbrell then left the meeting at 20.16hrs due to ill health

It was agreed that this would be adjourned to allow Councillors the chance to give this consideration and discuss that the April meeting.

**ACTION: Councillors to review the data ahead of the next meeting.
Agenda item for April meeting.**

10. PLANNING

10.1 [2021/0086/HSE](#) - The Cottage, Edford Green, Holcombe, Radstock, BA3 5DB
Erection of double garage with accommodation above and link extension.

This is a revised application of 2020/1986/HSE which has already been approved with conditions by Mendip Planning Office. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Gait that the application should be recommended for approval on the basis that there are no changes to the size or layout of the building.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

Action: The Clerk to notify Mendip Planning Office

10.2 [2020/2534/HSE](#) - 1 Vale View, Common Lane, Holcombe, Radstock, BA3 5DP

Demolish existing garage and erect a larger garage, repair, rebuild and extend outbuilding, remove hedge in rear garden and replace with stone wall to match existing and create a wider access gate to allow for additional car parking space.

It was noted that the size of the garage is greater than the current structure and it is proposed that the hedge between the 2 sections of wall would be replaced by a wall. Cllr Gait said that he had spoken with the nearest neighbour and they did not intend to raise an objection. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Brand that the application be recommended for approval on the basis that it would enhance the property, the street scene and would create additional off road car parking.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

It was noted that the dog waste bin which was currently in the hedgerow may need to be relocated. The Clerk will contact the applicant to establish if there is another possible location.

**Action: The Clerk to notify Mendip Planning Office
Clerk to contact the applicant regarding the dog waste bin**

11. PLANNING UPDATES

2020/1350/APP – Approval of details reserve by conditions 10 (Footpath) on planning consent 067642/009, Plot North of Wayside, Common Lane, Holcombe.

The Clerk had been in contact with the applicant who confirmed that they had been trying to work with both Somerset Highways and Mendip Planning Office over the last year in an attempt to obtain the required permission to allow the pavement to be installed. They

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confirmed it had been a frustrating time with limited communication or advice on how this could be secured.

Both County Cllr Pullin and District Cllr Ham spoke directly with the applicant and representatives from Somerset Highways and the Mendip Planning Office and it is believed that the applicant has now instructed an agent to help with the application.

The Mendip District Council Local Plan Part II is currently out for 6-week Consultation from the 9th Feb to the 22nd March on the Amended Main Modifications to the Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2). These cover two issues only, the requirement to take mitigation measures on development is likely to release Phosphates onto the Levels, and the removal of one proposed site in Rode.

12. FINANCE

- 12.1 Bank Reconciliation - Cllr Golledge had checked the reconciliation prepared by the Clerk and confirmed it to be in order
- 12.2 Review Playing Field Accounts year end 2021 - The Clerk to email a copy of the accounts for councillor's perusal.
- 12.3 Clerks Laptop - Consider the quote received to repairs or replace with new laptop. - The Clerk reported that Geeking It Simple had reviewed the Councils laptop which was incredibly slow and had a fault in the screen. They recommended that it was not financially viable to undertake the repairs due to the age of the laptop and that the money would be better invested into a new device. Three quotes had been received and after discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should decide which device was most appropriate for the job. It was proposed by Cllr Golledge and seconded by Cllr Robinson that the Clerk had up to a £1000, which had been allocated in the budget for the coming financial year to purchase a new laptop with the relevant software and installation.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

Action: The Clerk to purchase the new laptop

10.2 Parish Council Payments

The following invoices were submitted for payment:

V Watts – Salary £440.23 and expenses £21.23 totalling £461.46
Coleford PC – Ink Cartridges @ £30.72
Shredding service @ £25.20 totalling £55.92
SALC – Local Council Finance explained totalling £25.00

Playing Field Payments

The following invoices were submitted for payment:

Adrian Mason – Audit of accounts 2020 totalling £56.00
Alvian Play & Recreation totalling £594.18

Cllr Gait proposed and Cllr Robinson seconded that the payments for both the Parish Council and the Playing Field should be made.

Vote: 5 For; 0 Against: 0 Abstentions

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11. WELCOME CLUBS REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION TO SPEND THE COMMUNITY PROJECT FUND GRANTED 2020

An email had been received from the Chairperson of the Welcome Club to say that they had not yet purchased the medical screen from the CPF award as they had intended to store the screen at the Village Hall which was closed due to the Covid 19 restrictions. They were seeking an extension in time to allow the purchase to be made once restrictions had eased.

It was proposed by Cllr Jennings and seconded by Cllr Golledge that an extension of 6 months be allowed for the Welcome Club to spend the grant and submit the receipt to the Parish Council.

Vote: 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

Action: Clerk to notify the Welcome Club of the extension

11. CONSIDER QUOTES FOR THE PROPOSED PLAYING FIELD PATH

The 2 shortlisted contractors Scott Construction and Stonemark were invited to review their quotes to include hoggin as a possible option for surfacing and to include a total cost to the Parish Council to cover all materials in case none was forthcoming by way of donation.

Both contractors had identified that edging could create extra work to install, extra cost to the build, extra maintenance by grounds men who would have to trim rather than mow over the edging and it would create straight lines when it was agreed that a more natural route would be preferred.

It was also agreed that hoggin surface material, like that used at National Trust grounds would be more porous in wet weather and less dusty in during dry spells. It was recommended by both Contractors that the hoggin would need to be deeper than the dust surfacing. But it was agreed that by reducing the path to a standard width of 1.2m, which is slightly wider than the existing path from the Lychgate into the field, it would make the installation much more straightforward meaning a saving in overall cost which would be counteracted by the additional depth of hoggin material.

It is clear that there will be an element of maintenance required to keep the path in good order in the future. Despite installing a membrane some seeds will land on the surface and successfully germinate. Grass will encroach onto the edge of the path overtime if allowed and general wear and tear will mean that periodically it will need to be topped up with hoggin and packed down. This is a consequence that must be accepted with this type of path. The path will link to the 4 access gates.

The Council had made it clear that weather depending they would like the path to be installed before the 21st June, which contractors acknowledged.

Materials will be stored in the car park during the build.

A site visit had been held with Neil Scott of Scott Construction to walk the route with the Clerk and Cllr Brand. Stonemark had confirmed that they were happy to meet if successful to do the same.

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After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Gait that the quote by Scott Construction should be accepted as follows:

Price for the complete works including materials £12,204.00 plus VAT
Price presuming material supplied by others £6,576.00 plus VAT
Price presuming free transport of soil away from site £11,704.00 plus VAT

Vote: 4 For; 0 Against: 1 Abstentions

District Cllr Ham said that Cookswood have confirmed that they are prepared to provide the materials free of charge as he is keen to support local villages. Neil Scott should liaise directly with Rick Massey of Cookswood to ensure the materials are of the required standard and to discuss delivery schedules etc.

It was agreed that Cllrs Brand and Cllr Jennings would work together to oversee the project. Cllr Brand proposed that in the event that materials offered by Cookswood were substandard and no grant funding was secured that the Parish Council would pay the full amount quoted of £12,204 plus VAT which would come from the Parish reserves. A vote was taken which with the majority supporting the proposal.

Vote: 4 For; 0 Against: 1 Abstentions

ACTION: Clerk to write to Scott to formally accept the quote
Clerk to write to all Contractors to thank them for quoting
Cllrs Brand & Jennings to manage the project & act as contact point for Mr Scott
Clerk and Cllr Gait to source grant funding

12. COUNCILLOR REPORTS / UPDATES

Somerset Association of Local Councils – Cllr Gait reported that he had attended the ‘Finance Explained’ training run by SALC, which he found to be worthwhile. It is recommended that Councils have a 5-year plan which all agreed should be considered after the playing field path project had been completed.

ACTION: Future agenda item

13. Discuss potential Solar panels and Textile bank at the Village Hall

Cllr Golledge said that there had been no further feedback from the Village Hall regarding the possible installation of solar panels.

The Playing Field committee had met and voted in favour of the installation of the textile bin in the playing field opposite the Village Hall, which would generate some income for the Playing Field committee. There had since been a request from one committee member that further consultation with parishioners should be sought and therefore the Clerk had requested that no further action be taken at that point until the position had been clarified. It was agreed that Cllr Jennings as the Acting Chair would speak with the Chair of the Playing Field committee to establish if the vote taken at the meeting still stands.

ACTION: Cllr Jennings to contact Chair of the Playing Field to clarify position

Cllr Golledge left the meeting due to internet connection issues

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14. MEETINGS TO ATTEND

Somerset Association of Local Councils had sent an email highlighting that at present the regulation allowing Local Councils to hold meetings remotely is set to end on the 7th May but this may be extended by Government. The Clerk recommended that both the Annual Parish Council meeting (4th May) and Annual Meeting of the Parish (20th April) be held on the scheduled dates as virtual meetings.

15. CORRESPONDENCE

Mendip District Council – Latest update regarding Stronger Somerset. Emailed to all Councillors

Mendip District Council – Calendar of public meetings 2021/22. Emailed to all Councillors

16. DATE OF THE NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Saturday 27th March Litter Pick - 10am start

Tuesday 6th April 2021 for Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday 20th April 2021 Annual Meeting of the Parish

Tuesday 4th May 2021 Annual Parish Council meeting

The meeting ended at 21.50hrs