

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

DRAFT

**Minutes from the Annual Meeting of the Parish, which took place on
Tuesday 28th March 2023 at 7.30 pm.**

Chairman: Cllr Simon Brand

Clerk: Vickie Watts taking the minutes.

There were 13 members of the public present

1. Apologies for absence

PCSO Robert Nell – Avon & Somerset Police PCSO
Cllr Philip Ham – Mendip District Councillor
Cllr Alan Townsend – Mendip District Councillor
Tony Robbins - Somerset Councillor
Kath Simpson – Ladies Evening Club
Helen James - Holcombe Village Hall
Margaret Blount - Holcombe Sports Group
Judith Stanford – Kilmersdon Gardeners
Tony Dyson - Parish Path Liaison Officer
Diana Spellward - Holcombe Crafts

2. Approve minutes of previous meeting on Tuesday 17th May 2022 & matters arising

The minutes from the last annual parish meeting held on the 17th May 2022 had been available on the website. It was agreed that they were an accurate record of the meeting. They were duly signed by the Chair

3. Meeting open to the public

There were no points raised.

4. Chairman's report by Councillor Simon Brand

Cllr Simon Brand reported as follows:

Let me start this review of the year by thanking my fellow councillors for their unstinting support and dedication. I am most grateful for their wise counsel and professionalism in dealing with a huge variety of issues that affect the daily lives of our parishioners; they give up their time willingly in the pursuit of making Holcombe a better place to live for everyone and I for one, am very grateful and appreciative of what they deliver. I am pleased to report that during the last year no councillors have stepped down and we have welcomed 2 new councillors, David Roberts who joined us in December and most recently Elaine Emery thereby taking our numbers up to a healthier 6 councillors. We still have vacancies for some more therefore if anyone would like to help shape the future of our community and get involved, please get in contact. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Vickie Watts, our longstanding clerk whose dedication, loyalty, integrity and knowledge are exemplary and we are indebted to her for making sure that the Council meetings run smoothly and all matters are brought to our attention and actioned accordingly.

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It has been a particularly busy year especially with the planning and organising of the late Queen's platinum jubilee in June which took up a considerable amount of time and effort. However, there

have also been a number of other events and activities that have taken place in addition to the more mundane albeit important business that is conducted at the monthly parish council meetings. To give you a flavour of what we have been doing over the course of this report I thought I would highlight a few major issues that we have dealt with on your behalf.

- We have scrutinised and provided comment to Mendip District Council planning department on all planning applications that relate to the village. These included recommended approval for the application for a new overflow car park for 34 vehicles in the field opposite the Farm shop and adjacent to the small residential car parking area on the south side of the Mells stream, and removing the conditions related to the opening hours of the playing field. These applications are still awaiting a decision by the planners. In addition, we have written to Mendip Planning Department raising parishioner's concerns about the development at Cookswood and requesting that we be kept informed of future amendments to the original application.
- We have continued to streamline our internal working practices to improve our understanding of particular issues and to make the parish council meetings more productive and efficient. You are most welcome to attend these and raise any issues or concerns at the Public Forum at the start of our meeting. These will all be noted and considered after the meeting where it will either be dealt with straight away or put on the agenda for the next meeting.
- We endeavour to keep our parishioners up to date on all issues impacting the village and surrounding area by providing updates in On The Map and lately the Coleford and Holcombe Community magazine, the website and the village Facebook page.
- We continue to address the ongoing problems of speeding and road safety in the village. We are in frequent dialogue with Somerset Highways regarding speed limits, white line painting and road repairs; whilst progress can be slow we do our best to keep the pressure on the people responsible to take action. We have very recently installed a Speed Indicator Device on the hill to assess its impact on speed. The machine is currently rented with an option to buy if we assess that it is making a difference to driver behaviour.
- We have made available £2300 through the Village and Community Grants which provide financial support to organisations that benefit the village.
- The platinum jubilee was a resounding success with over 250 people attending the events on the playing field and a further 70 attending the quiz. On Sunday at the Pageant Picnic, the church raised over £600 as a result of the raffle, the military veterans raised over £250 by running the food stall and we were able to donate over £250 to the Coleford Food Bank which benefits our parishioners. The ladies' evening club, village hall, scouts, brownies and football club also used the events to fundraise for their organisations and we are grateful to everyone who supported them.
- We are currently planning the Coronation Party in the Park on Saturday 6 May to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.
- We carried out work on the playing field in October to spruce it up as it was looking a bit scruffy with weeds, brambles, branches and litter becoming more prevalent. Members of the village joined the PC for a few hours which resulted in significant improvement and brought parishioners together for the good of the environment.

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- We have instructed Jeremy Weare Ltd to carry out the refurbishment of the Jubilee Garden. The scope of work includes taking up all the old paving slabs which are creating a safety hazard and relaying new ones to create a path through the gardens to the benches. These paths will be accessible for wheelchairs and buggies and bounded by gravel and sleepers. The work commences in mid-April and will be finished in time for the coronation.
- We approved the installation of the miner silhouette which was kindly donated to the village by the Miners' Welfare Trust in recognition of the important role the village played in that industry in the past.
- Finally on behalf of the Parish we would like to thank both Philip Ham and Alan Townsend who have been our Mendip District Councillors for some time and will step down on the 1st April when the Unitary Council comes into force. We wish them both well for the future.

So, you can see that plenty has been occupying us over the course of the last 12 months but our in trays remain full and there is much more to be done in the forthcoming year. We look forward to serving our community and welcome your feedback at any time.

5. Mendip District Councillors Report

District Cllr Townsend did not attend but said that this would be Mendip DC closing report some 49 years after its formation – they've not been there that long but Philip started 2007 and Alan in 2015. Both have been very active members being variously involved in:

Asset management, including Assets of Community Value for Eagle and RBL	
Audit Committee	Licensing Board
Cabinet/Cabinet Assistant	Mendip Lottery
Car Park Strategy	Migrant forums
Changing Places for less able bodied	Planning Board
Commercial property income generation	Quarry Liaison Committees
5 Councils outsourcing contract	Renewable Energy
Equalities Board	Scrutiny Board
Enforcement	SHAPE Mendip Campus revamp
Frome Independent Market	Shape our Future
Fusion Leisure	Social Housing, including Mackintosh
Glastonbury Festival	View, Coleford
Idverde maintenance contract	Staff and Councillor Development
Keyring Letting Agency	Syrian Refugees

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

Started by the previous Conservative administration:

- Recycle More programme giving major increase in recycling rates
- Climate and Ecological Emergency declared
- Saxonvale site procurement and redevelopment partner established

RECENT DISAPPOINTMENTS

Failure to produce a valid Local Plan with a 5 year housing land supply – leading to unwanted developments, especially locally at Stoke (Coalpit Lane), Leigh (AMV), White Post (Beauchamp Drive) and Anchor Rd in Coleford. Losing a Judicial Review on the validity of Local Plan site allocations has cost us tax payers £65k plus. A new Local Plan is 5 years away leaving us open to speculative development.

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Saxonvale – a way ahead is still not resolved with 2 competing proposals granted planning permission. A Judicial Review has been raised against Mendip for allegedly not respecting the Local Plan.

Multi User Paths – nothing for us as attention has focussed on the Strawberry line

Obituary – sadly we have to report the passing of 4 Mendip Councillor colleagues in the last year, the most recent being John Greenhalgh on 15th March

WAY AHEAD

It will be important to establish lines of communication with the new Unitary Authority, either directly or through our Local Community Network.

6. Somerset County Councillor's Report

Tony Robbins did not attend but provided the following report:

Good Evening , Firstly I must apologise for not being there in person. My name is Tony Robbins and along with Edric Hobbs we are you County Councillors.

Life as a county councillor has been interesting and a steep learning curve. We are now just a few days away from the biggest change in local government since the early 70s and is a pretty exciting time to be involved. We are right now in the middle of training to be able to take on our new responsibilities , in my case Planning and Licensing , I hope that once the courses are complete we will be able to get into more of a routine attending parish meetings and of course the new LCN,s.

I hope the monthly reports that are being sent are proving useful, they contain a lot information and if there are any questions please don't hesitate to contact me or Edric.

A few words about me just so you know who you are dealing with. As mentioned before my name is Tony Robbins I am also a Councillor on Wells City Council I was The Mayor in 2010/11. I am the Landlord of a pub called The Venue which is located on South Street. Wells.

I am married to Sylvia and I have one daughter. Should you ever need to contact me please do so your clerk has my contact details. I look forward to seeing you in the near future.

Regards Tony Robbins

Councillor Edric Hobbs attended and introduced himself as the Somerset Councillor for the parish a role which he has been in with Tony Robbins for the last year, covering the Mendip Hills Division which covers a vast area from Burrington Combe to Kilmersdon.

Unitary Council will start on the 1st April. Planning will be roughly the same but will be known as North / South / West & East areas with Holcombe being in East and hearings will be at Shape Mendip on the 1st Tuesday of each month at an earlier time to allow the meetings to run a little longer than they could during the evenings due to restriction of the building having to be closed at 10pm. Feeding back requests on Highway matters when required can also be done. Edric confirmed that he would continue to work closely with Philip Hm who is the Somerset Councillor for the neighbouring ward and his experience of Holcombe and the surrounding villages is priceless.

7. PCSO/Police Report

The PCSO did not attend and no report had been received.

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8. Reports from Village Organisations

8.1 - Village Hall Committee

Helen James the Chair of the Village Hall was unable to attend but gave the following report: The hall is continually being well used, with regular bookings running Sunday to Friday. Steve Blount has finished a lot of the building maintenance, though there is still some more to do in the store cupboard. We have now had new thermostats installed on the heaters where they are controlled by two heaters and do not require adjusting by the users. During the school Easter Holidays we are having the toilets revamped and new hand dryers installed.

In the financial year of 2022 there was income greater than expenditure of £4103 and the balance sheet showed net assets/liabilities of £27928 at the end of the year.

In the year we received donations from Mendip District Council of £3667, this was in addition to the £8,000 received in the last financial year.

The Glastonbury festival was held this year after the absences through the Covid pandemic and we received a donation of £4050. Many thanks to the team who volunteered and attended the event. We also received a generous donation of £1000 from the 'Hive' for new cookers for the Hall.

The Hall continues to be well used by the community and the Income raised from the general hiring of the Hall was significantly ahead of last year which had been interrupted for part of the year by the pandemic.

In 2022 our regular clubs included Brownies/Guides, Activities Groups, Friendship Club, Craft Club, Ladies Evening Club, Art Club, Yoga Clubs, Pilates, Tai Chi, as well as for Band Practice and Drama.

Our Breakfast club mornings continued to be a success and raised over £1000 in the year and will for the Coronation of King Charles III be holding an Afternoon Tea (there may still be a few places left – contact Kath Simpson if interested)

However, in what was and what continues to be difficult times we remain in a reasonable financial position. Further upgrading and maintenance of the building with rising energy costs will impact on our resources in the coming year.

8.2 - Holcombe Playing Field

The Playing Field Committee is still comprised of 4 members, Russ Stokes, Vickie Watts, David Hirst and Stephenie Chorley, who oversee the management and maintenance of the Playing Field. Our thanks go out to the Parish Council, who continue to provide a grant for the high costs of upkeep, and we also thank The Holcombe Hive for their contributions following events held by them on the Playing Field. Expenses continue to rise, with Insurance at £1k alone without maintenance etc.

The Hive Music Festival on 10th September was a huge success, thanks to the hard work of Lynne, Laura and the team.

The Playing Field was pleased to host the Platinum Jubilee celebrations that had been organised by Holcombe Parish Council. This year's Coronation celebrations will also include events on the Playing Field.

The textile bin brought in revenue of £384 last year, an increase on the previous year which is encouraging.

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We replaced the rotting bench around the tree with a new picnic table and procured a new plaque to replace the damaged one, which had been on the tree, dedicated to Kate Attwood and Daphne Light. This was funded by donations from the congregation of St Andrew's Church. The new plaque has been discreetly placed on one of the picnic tables.

Vickie Watts continues to inspect the play equipment on a weekly basis, and there is an annual RoSPA inspection. We again hosted carol singing last Christmas, with thanks to Rev Clarissa for blessing the tree, and to Holcombe Farm Shop for providing refreshments. Thanks also to everyone who helped set up the lights at the Lychgate and on the tree.

We need to raise funds for the ever-increasing costs of upkeep of the Playing Field, but this needs volunteers with ideas for fundraising events and/or to help organise them. We are considering a Summer café in the barn, a quiz or perhaps a Barn dance. If you have any ideas, please contact one of us. You will not be expected to join the Committee!

The Playing Field will be an integral part of the forthcoming Coronation events, and we are proud to be custodians of such a valuable asset to the Village.

8.3 - Parish Path Liaison Officer (PPLO) report.

Mr Tony Dyson did not attend but said that his email address is now listed as a contact in the community magazine so people can contact him with problems even when he's on his travels. But so far this year, no one has raised any issues.

8.4 - Youth Football Club

No report was received.

8.5 - 1st Coleford Scouts

Another exciting year for the group as our numbers grow to a stable level supporting around 50 local children throughout the area. With activities ranging from kayaking to county competitions we have had a very full year as some of you may have seen groups of young people exploring the countryside on Saturday with 1st Coleford hosting the District centaur hike challenge organising and hosting 12 groups of cubs on 10km hike around and about.

We have been continuing our struggle with renovations fund raising across the board whilst trying to fit this in within the busy timetable. Over the past year we started the renovations of the building that was built in 1831 starting the journey with the demolition of the internal partition walls and renew of the floor, we have renewed and lowered and replaced the ceiling and replaced all of the electrics, we are now replacing the kitchen and are making the essential building works required to make it disabled friendly, last month we bit the bullet and replaced the windows to increase the thermal reliability of the building but also to stop the wind from blowing through the original frames .

As you can imagine the cost has been exponentially expensive and has tried and tested our very small group of volunteers, hopefully you will all see the progress within the CH community magazine over the next few issues. We still have a long way to go and are fundraising for phase 4 which is aimed to complete the access issues.

We often take time to work within the community and spent some time last year planting wildflowers and clearing verges of debris and rubbish. As a group we growing and looking forward to a summer full of camping and activities, as the daffodils begin to appear our outside adventure begins with teaching young people some exciting outdoor skills.

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8.6 - Holcombe Brownies & Guides

Currently we have 19 Brownies and 8 Guides with 4 girls on the waiting list. We have two young people joining us over the past year to complete their volunteering requirement of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Girlguiding Programme & Awards

Over the last year we have been working on our 'Take Action' and 'Skills for my Future' of the Girlguiding programme. The Take Action theme enables girls to develop their skills to make a positive difference, whether in their community, the wider world or with the people they know. The Brownies have completed activities looking at how to influence people and get their message across, their right to protest and the difference between fact, opinion and speculation. The guides have also held debates on some of the global goals that were set in 2015 and looked at the concept of privilege. We also took part in UK parliament week where we learned more about the restoration of the Elizabeth Tower, played Big Ben Bongo and played vote with your feet.

Under the Skills for my Future theme, we have been looking at the knowledge, skills and confidence required to become an effective leader. Activities have included those that look at delegation, communication and resolution.

The Brownies complete their Mindfulness badge together.

We have awarded two Brownie Bronze Awards and one Guide Bronze Award. Our District Commissioner has been awarded the Somerset Silver Award (the highest award given out by county) for her exceptional service and contribution to Girlguiding in Somerset.

Celebrations

We marked the Queens Jubilee with other members of Girlguiding, Somerset at the Bishops Palace in Wells. Activities included a treasure hunt, circus skills, archery, axe throwing, and toasting marshmallows before we all came together for the lighting of the Beacon.

We also had our own Jubilee party with Shepton Mallet Brownies and Guides, with lots of food and games and joined in with the Picnic in the Park here in Holcombe.

As Halloween fell on a Monday, we had a party with lot of silly games – including eating doughnuts off a string without using your hands, hunting 'eyeballs' in the dark, apple bobbing and mummy races.

This year we have decided to celebrate Burns night, by making shortbread, piping in the 'haggis' and having a go at reading (and translating!) some of the Robert Burns poetry.

For Pancake Day, the girls got to make and eat pancakes with their choice of toppings.

Other Activities

We held our annual Christmas Café, which raised just over £260 for the unit. The Guides have completed a biscuit challenge which included activities such as coming up with a recipe for their own biscuit, designing the packaging, making an edible badge and baking biscuits.

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We were joined by some forest school leaders who helped to teach the girls how to whittle, with the girls making a knife from Hazel.

We have also been making good use of all the sports equipment we purchased from a grant given to us by the Holcombe Hive.

Other Outings and Events

Last May we had a sleepover at Clip n' Climb in Weston Super Mare. The girls had exclusive use of the climbing walls, with one guide making her promise at the top of one! Our Guides were given the opportunity to join Shepton Mallet guides at Foxlease (a girl guiding centre in the New Forest) to celebrate Thinking Day. They took part in crate stacking, made plant pots, sowed seeds and enjoyed the 65 acres of grounds that Foxlease offers.

We visited Shepton Mallet Prison where the girls completed an escape room activity and had a fantastic tour of the prison.

The girls took part in our District Challenge Day, completing activities that tested their teamwork, creativity and girl guiding skills. Unfortunately, Holcombe Brownies did not retain the Janet Ellis cup this year, but it was won by Holcombe Guides, so at least it has stayed with us.

On Remembrance Sunday, Brownies, Guides and their parents paraded to the church to take part in laying a posy on behalf of our units, with some girls and parents also staying for the service.

We visited indigo Archery for a taster session, where the girls had great fun learning the basics of shooting arrows and we have been swimming together at Dragonfly Leisure Centre in Midsomer Norton.

This weekend Guides will be joining Shepton Mallet Guides for a Gruffalo themed camp at Huish Woods near Taunton where they will be doing a zip wire, archery, cooking all their meals over a fire and completing some Gruffalo themed challenges.

Guides had an indoor camp in Wiltshire with an Ancient Egyptian theme.

Future Plans

We will be joining Girlguiding members from across Somerset to celebrate the Kings Coronation with a camp at the Bishops Palace.

We have booked Brook Lodge at Briarslands Activity Centre in South Gloucestershire for a two-night stay in October for the Brownies.

8.7 - Holcombe Ladies Evening Club

Kath Simpson was unable to attend but provide the following report:

Since the last AGM the Ladies group have speakers talking on a range of subjects. From Pom Pom exercises and Pilates, to a retired fire officer, a script writer and an explorer.

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We have had meals out, a tour of Downside Abbey and have made some Christmas baubles. There were a lot of Tea and cakes served over the jubilee. Thanks must go to the ladies who made cakes and served on the day.

The group as a whole has decided to move our meetings to the second Monday of the month in the afternoon from now on.

8.8 - Ladies Sports Group

Mrs Margaret Blount did not attend but provided the following report:

As I am not able to attend the Holcombe PC AGM on Tuesday, please accept on behalf of the sports groups this brief note. Both sports activities groups have enjoyed very full attendance during the past year and enjoy using all the facilities of our village hall.

8.9 - Holcombe Crafts Group

Mrs Diana Spellward did not attend but provided the following report:

Sorry I won't be able to attend the Parish Council Meeting tomorrow

Just to say the Craft Group are still meeting regularly with a stable attendance of above ten members per session. Enthusiasm is as high as ever with a new project undertaken each session. No grand projects this year for once. Last year we made yards of bunting which we will once again get out for the Kings Coronation.

8.10 - Kilmersdon Gardeners

This past year was an opportunity to catch up with our losses in members and income during the COVID period.

We have had some new members join us who have enjoyed our variety of speakers on subjects such as the answer lies in the soil, Fuchsias, family friendly wildlife gardens, how to set up an organic flower farm, the climate change garden and more, our *pièce de resistance* was a talk by Chris Sperring on British Owls.

Our plant sale went well and we were pleased the income was more than the previous year. The plant sale is a must to help towards rising costs of speakers as well as their travelling costs increasing since the Pandemic and all things political.

Our AGM was held in February, the committee welcomed a returning member as well as a new Programme Secretary who has put together a fantastic programme for 2023/4. We are still in need of a secretary to lighten the load of the Chairperson. It was agreed not to increase the subs from February 2024. The committee was voted on for the next year and the programme of speakers with their subject accepted by members of the club.

After the official business the members thoroughly enjoyed the finger buffet two of our members produced as well as wine and fruit juice. Members decided it was so relaxed and friendly we should make it an annual event or two!

Do come and try us out, visitors are asked for a fee of three pounds which includes refreshments, our annual membership is ten pounds. We are sure you will enjoy our meetings; we are a friendly group with a diverse programme of speakers. Our doors are open at 7.15pm to allow for refreshments to be served before the speaker is introduced at 7.30pm.

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Details of our forthcoming meetings can be found on our website www.kilmersdongardeners.org; or on our Facebook page Kilmersdon Gardeners

8.11 - St Andrews Church

Ann Gardiner-Bryan attended the meeting and read out the report as follows:
Clarissa sends her apologies as she is not able to attend this meeting.

There has been a big change in that we now have three churches in our Benefice. Coleford, Holcombe and Kilmersdon. On Saturday 7th January Clarissa was Licenced as the first Vicar of the new East Mendip Benefice.

On a Saturday Morning Clarissa sends out a weekly e-mail to keep us all up to date as to what is happening in the Benefice Churches over the coming weeks. This idea started in Lockdown so that we could keep in touch and has now continued. If you would like to be included please let Clarissa know and let her have your e-mail address.

There has been one slight alteration to the Thursday morning service in that it now takes place on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 10 30 am. All are welcome.

If there are five Sundays in a month we hold a Benefice Service and the three Churches take it in turns to host it and offer a different kind of service

We hold Services in the Old Church on the first Sunday of June July and August also we have a Carol Service on the first Sunday after Christmas.

Our Free Monday Morning Coffee from 11 am to 12 noon is still as popular as ever. This is open to anybody from the village or anyone who would like a cup of coffee. It is certainly not restricted to Church members. It is also open on Bank Holidays as well and this has proved beneficial to those who live by themselves.

Fundraising - We held our Gift Day in May. A letter goes out to the Village with an envelope for donations to help with the running of the Church. We also hold a Fete on this day for villagers to come along and support us.

We held the Pet Service outside the Church in July we also had a BBQ which was enjoyed by all who attended.

We had a Cream Tea in John Ashley's garden in August.

In October we held a Coffee Morning in the Village Hall.

A Christmas market was held in the Village Hall in November and we opened the Church so that the Children's Band could perform. We were able to provide tea/coffee at this event.

Our popular Christmas Bingo was also held in November.

In December we held our Christmas Fair.

We will be holding Fundraising events throughout the year which will be advertised on our website: www.eastmendiptrinity.co.uk. We can also be found on Facebook.

Last, but by no means least, you will be welcome to come any time and join with us in our Church Services.

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8.12 - Holcombe Hive

No report received

9. Launch of the Community Project Fund 2022

The Clerk confirmed that applications are available for groups to apply for grants. The total amount available is £1000. The money should be going towards something that will have a lasting benefit to the residents of Holcombe. The deadline for application forms to be received is the 31st August with cheques being written at the October Parish Council meeting. Applications are available to download from the parish website: The Clerk will continue to promote the grants on the Facebook page and notice board.

10. Date and time of the next Annual Meeting of the Parish

Tuesday 19th March 2024

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and for contributing to making the village what it is. We have a lot going on and want to continue to go from strength to strength.

Meeting closed at 20.45hrs.

These minutes are confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

Chairman _____ Date _____