

**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) 07971 516916 / 01479 880428

**Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Meeting, which took place on  
Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 at 7.30 pm at Holcombe Village Hall.**

*Councillors Present* Cllr Simon Brand (Chair)  
Cllr Simon Eade  
Cllr Phil Gait  
Cllr Helen Kerr

*In attendance:* District Cllr Alan Townsend and District Cllr Philip Ham.  
There were 8 members of the public.

**1. Public forum**

A resident raised concern over ongoing inconsiderate parking on Stratton Road, opposite Croft Road which makes it difficult to negotiate safely as all traffic has to approach on one side of the road. It also means that any larger delivery vehicles or refuse lorries are unable to access the road.

Homeowners affected have regularly left notes on the car windscreens asking drivers not to park there but the problem continues.

Somerset Highways have responded to the Clerk's enquiry on what can be done about this and they have highlighted that if there is a genuine obstruction, then it would be a police matter. They also said that a no parking zone is usually a restricted zone for a set and determined area and would not be applicable in this location.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to the residents on Stratton Road highlighting the consequences of the inconsiderate parking as well as mentioning it in On the Map and posting it on Facebook in order to alleviate the issue.

***Action: Cllr Brand to draft letter to resident***

Members of public then left the meeting

The Clerk had received a telephone call from a parishioner who lived at Edford Green who was concerned about speeding on Holcombe Hill. The Clerk explained to the resident the work that the Parish Council has been doing with Somerset Highways over recent years to find a suitable solution to help slow traffic and advised that they are currently researching the benefits of installing a speed indicator device.

The parishioner also raised concern regarding the Stoke Bottom road and how the extensive use by Penny's lorries over recent years have damaged the verge and the ditch, which is now flooding and will be dangerous when icy. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council is aware of this issue and have reported it to Somerset Highways.

The Parishioner also asked if the lighting on the lower part of Holcombe Hill could be improved.

***Action: Clerk to contact the resident to say that we will monitor the lighting situation.***

**2. Co-option of Councillors**

There were none. It is understood that a potential candidate will attend the March meeting.

**3. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from County Cllr Mike Pullin.

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**4. Declaration of interests and dispensations**

There were none.

**5. Approve Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

The Clerk had circulated the minutes prior to the meeting. Cllr Kerr proposed that they should be approved which was seconded by Cllr Eade. The Clerk to upload to the Parish website.

*Vote: 4 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions*

**6. Action updates from the last meeting**

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

**7. Reports**

7.1 PCSO report

No report received

7.2 Somerset County Council

County Cllr Mike Pullin did not attend but provided the following report:

**Coronavirus infection rates:** As of 28<sup>th</sup> January, the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 106,569 (27% up from 83,300 on 30<sup>th</sup> December) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 977. The rate per 100,000 stands at 964.2 (766.6) for Somerset with Mendip at 766.5 (892.0), Sedgemoor at 1143.1 (756.6), South Somerset 921.3 (684.3) and SW&T at 1016.0 (770.4). The number of total deaths across the County is currently below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.8 and 1.1

**Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline:** A single phone number continues to be available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

**Vaccination programmes roll-out:** Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 96.2% of the 18+ population having had one dose of vaccine and 93.8% having had both doses. In total 63.7% of the adult population have also received their booster.

**Local Government Reorganisation:** Following the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset the Structural Changes Order was laid before Parliament on 24<sup>th</sup> January. The agreed vesting date remains 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The first elections to the new authority together with Somerset Town and Parish elections will be held on 5th May 2022.

**County Council Revenue Budget:** Somerset County Council has published its last draft proposed budget ahead of the creation of a new unitary Somerset Council in April 2023. The council is proposing major increases in investment in care services, with an increase for Adult Social Care of £18m (13%), and over £12m (also 13%) for Children's Services. The increase in funding for Adult Social Care in part reflects the council's recent decision to support an increase in carers pay and to provide a retention bonus for care staff in Somerset. This is intended to support the recruitment and retention of staff in a challenging job market for care services.

**County Council Capital Budget:** SCC is proposing to allocate £48 million for capital spending in the coming year. This includes substantial investment in measures to tackle climate change, building on the council's successful Climate Emergency Community Fund. The council has allocated £1 million in new match funding to support the "decarbonisation" of schools – on top of the existing £7.8 million investment in decarbonising the council's buildings, including libraries. A further £1 million has been allocated for

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electric fleet vehicles and charging infrastructure. A new investment of £1 million has been allocated to local transport schemes.

**Proposed Council Tax:** Council Tax for SCC is proposed to rise by two per cent with a further one per cent rise for the social care precept. This compares to UK inflation in December running at over four percent and will mean that Somerset County Council continues to set one of the lowest County Tax rates in the UK.

**Somerset libraries:** Since libraries reopened their doors last April, Somerset Libraries have had over half a million visits and have welcomed over 16,000 new members. To encourage even more people to reconnect with library services and support communities as they start to recover from the impact of the pandemic Somerset Libraries is running two initiatives from 21<sup>st</sup> January until the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Children and young people aged 17 and under will not be charged for using any library services. This includes requesting books from other libraries, borrowing DVDs and no charges for the late return of items! The service will also be happy to clear outstanding charges, for all customers, incurred before 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022, no questions asked. To take advantage of this ‘welcome back’ offer, visit your local library before the 31<sup>st</sup> March and speak to a member of staff.

**Climate change action 1:** Somerset County Council has been ranked as the top county council in the UK when it comes to taking a lead on climate change. Climate Emergency UK has ranked all 409 local authorities, scoring them against nine categories, including how well councils’ plans would mitigate the impact of climate change locally, whether the climate and ecological emergency was integrated into existing policies, community engagement, climate education, scale of emissions targets, and commitments to tackle the ecological emergency. Somerset County Council was named as the top county council, meanwhile Somerset West & Taunton Council was ranked as the top district council

**Climate change action 2:** A grant available to help Somerset people benefit from energy efficient installations worth up to £10,000 has been extended until June 2022. The Green Homes Grant Scheme allows eligible homeowners to apply for vouchers to install climate-friendly energy saving measures such as insulation, air source heat pumps, or double glazing. The work can be worth up to £10,000, with nothing for homeowners to pay towards the cost of the works. To be eligible for the grants, the residents of the property must have a low income and the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property must be rated D, E, F or G. visit [www.heatsomerset.co.uk](http://www.heatsomerset.co.uk) for more information.

### 7.3 Mendip District Council

District Cllr Townsend submitted the following report:

**Local Plan Part 2:** A briefing session from Mendip Planning confirmed fears that the lack of 5-year housing land supply could be an issue for many years. They sought from Mendip its proposals to put in hand a plan to rectify the shortage. The response that “Officers will review in the coming months how the requirements and timescales for plan review can be progressed as a joint workstream in transition to the new Somerset authority” is not acceptable and will provide no protection to our villages from speculative development. Appeals submitted against Mendip’s refusals at Leigh on Mendip, Stoke St Michael, Chilcompton and White Post will show how vulnerable parishes are.

**MDC Parish Forum:** This took place on 11<sup>th</sup> January focused on Tree Planting to address the shortfall of tree cover in the county with some 6-8% coverage in Somerset compared to the UK average of 13% and Europe at 40%. Perceived benefits are for climate change and bio-diversity, within the 3 themes of Protect, Restore and Create. Hard to equate this with Mendip’s failure to protect the Elm Tree on Anchor Rd, Coleford. Parishes are asked to nominate ‘Tree Champions’. Also, Carbon Literacy training is to be offered to Parishes

Somerset Waste Partnership also gave a brief advising that despite the well-publicised difficulties missed collections are now virtually eliminated in Mendip. Mendip is leading in the Recycle More programme, with some 98% of recycling remaining in the UK and the majority of non-recycling goes into energy from waste.

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**Highways:** A meeting was held with the landlord of the Duke of Cumberland to examine possible solutions to the parking issue. The zeal of Mendip in enforcing the closure of the upper car park was unprecedented and had very obvious implications for highway safety. The District Councillors are intending to write to Enforcement to ask them to rescind the order so that the area could be used in the short term.

**Unitary:** The Structural Change Order has now been placed before Parliament to allow both Houses to debate and approve the legal basis for the new Somerset Council to provide all services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. This is scheduled to be approved in time for the local elections to proceed on 5<sup>th</sup> May this year.

District Cllr Ham submitted the following report:

**Unitary:** The first meeting of the Local Government Reorganisation Scrutiny group was held when they appointed officers. Sarah Wakefield is to Chair the group. Terms of reference and meeting protocol were agreed. A programme update was given including governance of progress and workstreams. There are six areas:

- Governance
- People
- Asset and technology
- Service alignment and improvement
- Finance
- Community, customers and partnerships

From these six areas there are 74 sub workstreams. 1 county council staff and 1 district council staff per workstream which mean there are already 150 staff involved with the process.

There are also:

- Communications plan
- LCN pilots
- Quality assurance
- Benefit management
- Risk management

The budget of £18.1 million was scrutinised for the implementation.

The finance and asset protocol for 2022/23 year was agreed to protect the new council.

**Council tax:** Somerset County Council have increased by 2% plus 1% for Adult social care and Mendip District Council have increased by 3%.

The Somerset County Council 2022/23 budget shows an increase of £18 million for Adult Social Care and £12 million for Children's Services which now totals £159.6 million for Adult Social Care and £105 million for Children's Services a combined total of £264 million or- out of 370 million total budget.

Mendip District Council has the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest Council tax in England.

**Climate Change:** Somerset is top of the County league. Taunton and West are top of the District league with Mendip top ten of the District league.

**Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations:** Cllr Ham thanked Cllr Brand for working with Coleford on the extended weekend of celebrations which is looking to be a very busy and enjoyable weekend.

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**8. Planning Applications**

All Councillors had considered the following planning applications prior to the meeting.

8.1 [2021/2815/FUL](#) - Land Adj 7 The Mead, Brewery Lane, Holcombe, Redevelopment of stables with 1 no. dwelling. (resubmission).

It was noted that this is a resubmission of the April 2021 planning application. The only difference is that the car port has been removed and replaced with a gravel drive and turning space. The original application was recommended for refusal as it was outside of development line, seeks to encompass greenfield and goes against the Holcombe Parish Council Village Design Statement.

After discussion Councillors agreed that the resubmission does nothing to address these points and it was therefore agreed that the resubmitted application should be recommended for refusal for the same reasons.

**Vote: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions**

8.2 [2021/2824/HSE](#) – Greylands, 10 Boundary Close, Holcombe, BA3 5FP  
Replacement of existing upvc windows with double glazed metal frame windows and doors. Minor changes in existing window and door openings. Addition of external thermal insulation on existing walls with render and timber cladding finish

There was some discussion as to whether the timber cladding would impact on the public visual amenity of the neighbourhood but it was noted that the property was back from the road and screened so should have little impact. All agreed that the addition of thermal insulation should be encouraged.

It was therefore agreed that the application should be recommended for approval on the basis that it would have limited visual impact on the surrounding area and the improvement to the thermal credentials should be encouraged.

**Vote: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions**

8.3 [2021/2920/FUL](#) - Rose Farm, Charlton Road, Holcombe, Radstock, BA3 5ET  
Change of use from agricultural to equestrian, the erection of a menage and replacement stables.

Councillors were content with the design and layout and recommended that the application be approved.

**Vote: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions**

*Action: Clerk to notify the planning office*

**9. Planning Updates**

There were none.

**10. Consider relocating the litter bin from Longleat Road**

The Parish Council has been asked to consider relocating the multi-use bin located at the end of Longleat Road next to the site of the old garages because access from the footpath is no longer feasible due to the new build. It was suggested that the bin could be relocated or a new dog waste bin purchased to be installed at either the start of the footpath on Longleat Lane or placed next to the grit bin at the junction of Longleat Lane and Longleat Road.

It was noted that if the footpath was no longer accessible, then it was unlikely that the bin would be fully utilised and should therefore be relocated if possible.

It was agreed that the Clerk would liaise with Somerset Highways to establish if the existing bin could be relocated to either of the preferred sites.

*Action: Clerk to liaise with Somerset Highways and Mendip District Council regarding approving the new site.*

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**11. Discuss the ongoing care of the Floral Gateways**

The Clerk confirmed that she had spoken with the volunteer who wished to take on the care of all 5 floral gateways to carry on the good work that her mother had done. The Clerk has stressed that if at anytime assistance is required then they must contact the Council so that support can be provided.

The Clerk confirmed that the other volunteers had been thanked and notified that their help was not required at this point.

*Action: Clerk to confirm role with volunteer*

**12. Update on the Community Tree planting event**

On the 26<sup>th</sup> February between 10.30 and 12 noon 60 trees will be planted by parishioners on the boundary of the playing field. The saplings will be approx. 4-5ft and will grow to a maximum height of 7ft. A letter has been sent to neighbouring residents notifying them of the project and inviting them to come and plant a tree.

Cllr Brand, the Clerk and Cllr Eade will meet prior to the event to pre drill the holes to make the process quicker and easier.

Compost will be purchased from the nursery on Charlton Road. The Council will provide the tools to use and the Playing Field committee will supply refreshments. Cllr Brand will invite the Mendip Times and The MSN and Radstock Journal to attend so that they can take photographs on the day and include an article in a later publication.

*Action: Clerk to arrange delivery, prepare poster advertising the event and refreshments. Cllr Brand to contact supplier to establish if stakes will be required to support the trees and contact the press.*

**13. Agree design of Footpath map for distribution to parishioners**

Cllr Gait circulated a draft of the footpath map which included the country code on the inside and information on how to report any damage or issues encountered whilst using a footpath. All agreed that in a laminated format it will be a useful item which will be distributed to all households in April after it has been publicised in OTM and Facebook.

*Action: Cllr Gait to finalise draft and arrange for printing. Cllr Brand to draft content for OTM and Facebook in April.*

**14. Finance**

**14.1 Bank Reconciliation**

To be completed before the next meeting.

*Action: Clerk to ensure checked before March meeting*

**14.2 Payments**

Parish Council Payments:

V Watts – Salary £344.24 and Expenses £25.46	£369.70
V Watts – 100 x 45cm spiral plant guards for trees	£ 25.00

Playing Field Payments:

Tim Candy – Playing Field hedge cutting	£180.00
Combe Garden Maintenance – Playing Field clean up	£300.00

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Cllr Kerr proposed that all payments should be made which was seconded Cllr Gait.

*Vote: 4 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions*

## 15. Highway

### 15.1 Consider purchase of a Speed Indicator Device for use on Holcombe Hill

The Clerk had circulated a spreadsheet showing relevant data for 2 of the 3 devices previously mentioned alongside each other for ease of comparison. The Clerk had been unable to make contact with the 3<sup>rd</sup> company and therefore only had basic details and price.

After discussion it was agreed that there was sufficient information to make a decision that a unit would be leased for installation at the approved site on Holcombe Hill for 2 months from SID Signs.co.uk for £250 per month. This cost can be recovered from the company should the SID be purchased thereafter.

Cllr Eade volunteered to complete the Chapter 8 training to enable him to work on the highway and maintain the unit. The Clerk will approach a parishioner who has suggested that he might be happy to volunteer to complete the training and take on the role.

**Action: Clerk to confirm intention to order with SID Signs.co.uk. Seek training provider and establish costs. Approach potential volunteer.**

### 15.2 Update on existing issues already reported to Somerset Highways

Sara Davis of Somerset Highways has given the following report:

#### **Completed projects:**

- Replacement of pedestrians in road sign on Edford Hill, up from the Holcombe Farm Shop
- Installation of road narrows sign on Charlton Rd

**Relocation of the 30mph on Brewery Lane:** Scheduled for next financial year (After 01/04/22)

**Small Improvement Scheme (To address implementing dropped kerbs):** This remains closed at present but hopeful there will be one in the future.

**Centre White Lines:** The Parish Council asked if some white centre line markings could be placed on a short stretch of Charlton Road. Ms Davis confirmed that it is not usual to place centre lines on rural lanes which are 5.5m in width and Charlton Road would not be considered wide enough and may give a false impression to motorists that two opposing vehicles have enough room to pass safely and due to the differing sizes of many of the vehicles using our roads today, this may not be the case, particularly in rural areas.

**Implementation of a 20mph limit:** The Parish Council asked what the criteria was for a 20mph speed limit or 20 mph zone.

Ms Davis confirmed that the limit must be self-enforcing, look like and feel like the limit and recorded speeds need to be 24 mph and under. If the Parish Council wanted to pursue this, we'd need to identify the area to be considered. Any speed limit request must be evidence based and they would look at collision history and speed data to begin the process. The Parish Council would need to consider funding this; the Traffic Regulation Order, consultation and any associated works which depending on the amount of work needed would be between £5,000 and £10,000.

#### **Why not extend the 30mph at bottom of Holcombe Hill?**

In July 2021 the County Councillor suggested that the Parish Council request an extension to the 30mph limit at the bottom of Holcombe Hill by the bridge, to move it back up towards Stoke St Michael. This was to improve the safety of those accessing the Farm Shop. A response was received from Somerset Highways stating it was not possible but they did not give a reason.

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Ms Davis confirmed that there is set criteria for making these decisions. When speed limit extents are located in the correct places, they do make a difference and impart the message to approaching motorists. The speed limit needs to look and feel like the limit so a 30mph through open countryside would not meet the criteria.

District Cllr Townsend said that Somerset Highways have completed some work at Stoke Bottom but will continue to press for improvements to the area where the erosion has worsened

***Action: Clerk to compile a report for OTM***

15.3 Report of new issues:

There were none.

Cllr Gait thanked highways for installing the new Common Lane sign at the junction with Holcombe Hill.

**16. Councillor Reports / Updates including Playing Field, Village Hall, SALC etc**

Holcombe Playing field: The Clerk will circulate the minutes from the January meeting.

**17. Meetings/Trainings to attend**

25/01/22 @ 10 til 5pm Carbon Literacy Training – Cllr Gait attended and circulated information regarding the day and proposed that it should be an agenda item for discussion after the elections.

03/02/21 @ 3.30 til 5pm – Local Government Reorganisation meeting. Open to all to attend via Teams

11/03/22 @ 11 til 1pm - SALC Preparing for Elections. Clerk to attend.

**18. Correspondence**

10/01/21 – Somerset Rights of Way. Information about reporting a problem, area wardens & volunteers. No action required.

25/01/22 – Email from resident requesting 20mph limit be implemented to slow traffic. The Clerk has emailed with a detailed response outlining how the Parish Council are trying to address the problem.

26/01/22 – Email from MDC outlining Elections on 05/05/22 and potential costs. No action required.

28/01/22 – Email received from resident regarding inconsiderate parking at the Farm Shop and concern that a new car park is going to be built in a nearby field. Clerk responded acknowledging the email and stated that the Parish Council would respond in the usual way as part of the consultation process if a planning application is submitted. No further action required.

01/02/22 @ 11.15am – Email from resident asking why there was a request to extend the 30mph out from the Farm Shop. Clerk to reply stating it was following up from a request in July 2021 to improve safety of those accessing the Farm Shop.

***Action: Clerk to send reply***

01/02/22 @ 12.51pm – Email from resident providing map of area where proposed car park will be built for the Farm Shop. Clerk to respond and acknowledge receipt of the email and state that the Parish Council will respond in the usual way as part of the consultation process if a planning application is submitted.

***Action: Clerk to send reply***



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01/02/22 – Email from a resident concerned over the planting of an orchard at the playing field. The Clerk has responded confirming the trees will be planted at the edge of the field and will be no more than 7ft when fully grown. They will not impact on the use of the field for football or reduce any view across the field. No further action required.

**Next meetings**

Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022

Meeting closed at 21.45hrs