

**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

**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 the May meeting would be conducted as a virtual meeting. This was achieved using “Zoom” software.**

**\*\*DRAFT\*\***

**Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Virtual Meeting, which took place on  
Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7.30 pm.  
(Following on from the Annual Parish Council meeting which started at 7pm.)**

*Councillors Present*                      Cllr Graham Crowe (Chair)  
   Cllr Phil Gait  
   Cllr Simon Brand  
   Cllr Peter Jennings  
   Cllr Sue Robinson

*In attendance:*                              County Cllr Mike Pullin, District Cllrs Philip Ham and Alan Townsend  
   The Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes and no members of the public

**1. Public forum**

- 1.1     The Clerk read out an email from a resident who was concerned about users of the playing field when exiting the field from the footpath gate onto Charlton Road as there is no pavement and cars and lorries pass at speed. It was agreed that in the interim the Clerk would place a laminated notice on the gate stating that pedestrians should be cautious when leaving the field.

**ACTION: Clerk to put up a notice as interim measure  
Agenda item for the June meeting**

- 1.2     The Clerk had received a complaint about the surface water coming from Cookswood onto Bector Lane as well as the state of Green Lane which had resulted in lorries using the route and driving onto the verges. The Clerk had informed the resident that these issues were in neighbouring parishes and they should raise the concerns with them directly but she would also highlight the concern with the District Councillors.

**2. Co-option of Councillors**

The Clerk confirmed that 4 members of the public had been in touch regarding the vacancies. It is hoped that there will be co-options at the June meeting.

*ACTION: Clerk to contact all interested parties  
Agenda item for the June meeting*

**3. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Golledge had sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

**4. Declaration of interests and dispensations**

There were none.

**5. Approve Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 6th April 2021**

The minutes had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Jennings and seconded by Cllr Brand that the minutes accurately reflected the meeting and should be signed by the Chair.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

*ACTION: Clerk to upload to the website*

**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

**6. Action points from last meeting and matters arising**

All matters arising had been completed or would be discussed as an agenda item during the meeting apart from:

- The Clerk had taken delivery of the Royal British Legion Tommy. It was agreed that the Clerk would deliver it to Cllr Brand who would investigate how it should be installed.
- The Clerk to continue to try and make contact with the home owners at 1 Vale Cottage regarding the possible relocation of the dog waste bin at the top of Holcombe Hill.

*ACTION: Clerk to complete action*

**7. Reports**

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

7.2 Mendip District Council – District Cllr Ham and Townsend attended the meeting and submitted the following report:

PLANNING - Application for 63 houses on Anchor Rd Coleford - the closing date for responses to the appeal against the refusal of the original application 2019/2345 was 13-4-21. Coleford's consultant submitted a detailed dissection of the appellant's case that Harm to the Countryside was minimal and he also stressed that the application contradicted the Emerging Modified Local Plan Part 2 which should be given substantial weight. Coleford Parish Council submitted a further document to attempt to bring back to the Inspector's attention the other issues of concern, i.e. Highways, Sewerage and Sustainability. Mendip Planners also submitted their formal response, focussing solely on the original reason for refusal, i.e. Harm to the Countryside. The timescales for the appeal are uncertain. An Inspector has yet to be appointed. The consultant's advice is that similar appeals are currently taking some 41 weeks from the Start Date, which takes us to Christmas. The limited consultation on the Emerging Local Plan Part 2 finished on 22nd March. Timescales have slipped, so the Planning Inspector is now scheduled to publish his final report in May. This will be debated by Mendip's Cabinet in July with a target to approve at Full Council in September. This relaxed timescale is being contested.

FULL COUNCIL - A special meeting was called on 15th April to discuss Mendip's response to the Unitary consultation, the Council having already endorsed the Stronger Somerset option. Notwithstanding any legal advice about holding public meetings which was not totally clear, the Conservative Group did not attend out of respect for the Period of National Mourning for HRH Prince Philip. The meeting itself was then curtailed as the proposal to hold a local poll was withdrawn in the light of a letter from the Secretary of State (S of S). This cast doubt on the legitimacy and value of the exercise, stating "I believe...it risks duplicating and detracting from the consultation to which thousands of people in Somerset have already responded" and it was too late to be taken into account. This was the separate consultation document many of you will have

received with a response date of 19th April, published by the 4 District Councils in a leaflet promoting Stronger Somerset. The legitimacy of this 'consultation' has been challenged.

An Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council was then held on 30th April to consider a "local poll (referendum)" claiming it will give residents a voice in the debate and help to inform the S of S's considerations. The S of S and a leading firm of lawyers and the Mendip District Councils Finance Officer warn against doing this, but a QC considers it to be a legitimate use of Council fund and resources. The local poll would start on 18th May and close on 4th June with responses to be made online or by post. Council agreed the poll should go ahead

The Annual Meeting of Full Council was held on 26th April when memberships of committees were decided. Cllr Ham continues on Scrutiny and as a substitute member of the Audit Committee. Cllr Townsend continues on the Planning Board and on the Audit Committee. A number of changes were

**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**

proposed to the Constitution which could have the effect of inhibiting debate, this is to be referred back to the Standards Committee.

UNITARY PLANS - Cllrs Ham and Townsend and the Clerk attended a virtual meeting hosted by Frome Town Council on 28-4-21 to give local parishes their views on the way ahead, assuming that one of the two unitary frameworks will be adopted. The principle of removing a level of local government was discussed, with its replacement by Local Community Networks (LCNs). The LCNs would be Town/Parish driven. We need to consider if we wish to be in an LCN including Frome, or if that would submerge us and a village grouping might work better. The first step is to draft a Matrix listing all the services currently provided by all levels of Councils and then suggest what services are provided at what level. A further meeting will be held in a months time.

PURDAH - We are still in the period of Purdah prior to the May elections so we do not expect to see any decisions which could be seen to have political implications. For Mendip DC there is a by election in St Thomas Ward in Wells following the resignation of Lib Dem Cllr McKinnell.

HIGHWAYS - Sara Davis of Highways has been notified of damage to 2 signs, the 30/40 sign on Brewery Lane and the Double Bend warning sign as you approach on Stratton Rd just beyond the Pitcot Lane junction.

Significant repair work has been carried out through Stoke Bottom after repeated requests.

**7.3 Somerset County Council** - County Cllr Mike Pullin attended the meeting. He stated that one of the main topics currently was the Unitary debate. The Government consultation has ended and we now wait for the Secretary of State's decision in July. The District Council have agreed that later this month (18 May to 4 June) a local poll of all electors on two proposals for the future of local government in Somerset currently under consideration – One Somerset and Stronger Somerset. Every elector will be issued with a ballot paper and invited to vote by post, with an online option. They believe that this would “give residents a voice in the debate and help the Secretary of State in understanding and determining the level of support amongst residents for each of the options. Somerset County Council did not take part in the poll.

District Cllr Ham said that there are questions being asked about whether the poll would be legal or binding. It could go to judicial review.

It is not known exactly how things will look if the One Somerset model is adopted but it is hoped that parish councils would have an opportunity to take on responsibilities for facilities like car parks, highways and some elements of social care etc meaning that they could manage. Frome Town Council and neighbouring parish councils recently met and discussed how the councils can work together to implement services at a more local level with financial support which would have originally gone to the council who provided the service.

## **8. Highways**

Terry Dumbrell had provided detailed summary and analysis of the data which was generated by the installation of Somerset County Councils camera technology which recorded data including speed and size of the vehicles. Cllr Jennings said that the data shows that there are 2 main points of interest 1) Speeding is at its worst on Brewery Lane and 2) The volume of vehicles over 6.6m in length makes up 22% of the village traffic.

Cllr Jennings suggested that we ask Somerset Highways if they have looked at the data and if so, what they have concluded. He also suggested that we revisit the list of actions which was created after the original meeting with Sara Davies back in February 2020 to establish if any of the points can be implemented.

**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**

County Cllr Pullin said that the Small Improvement Schemes were closed at the present to allow Somerset Highways to catch up on the implementation of the schemes which have previously been agreed. Once this has been done the scheme will be open again for new applications.

It was agreed that as a council we need to prioritize what the issues are in the village and agree what we want to address and how that can be achieved before going back to Somerset Highways.

Cllr Ham said that the majority of the parishes located between Radstock, Frome and Shepton Mallet have the same issues in that the roads are not up to the volume of traffic which has grown due to the increase in housing over the years. Lorries have also got larger and are driving through villages to access the quarries, concrete works etc which is impacting on the road surfaces and safety to other users and residents.

It was agreed that the Clerk would draft a strong letter asking what can be done to Alan Jones, Sara Davies of Somerset Highways copying the letter to County Cllr Mike Pullin and District Cllrs Philip Ham and Alan Townsend to add weight to the request.

County Cllr Pullin asked that we notify him and Somerset Highways if there are any issues with blocked drains as he has currently been putting pressure on them to ensure that the drains are cleared properly to prevent flooding.

*ACTION: Clerk to draft letter to Somerset Highways asking for action  
Council to consider priorities ready for the next meeting  
Continue to ask for evidence of issues relating to HGV damage/incident  
Agenda item for June*

## **9. Planning Applications**

[2021/0669/TPO](#) – 1 Holcombe Chapel Longleat Lane Holcombe

T1 Copper Beech - prune to a maximum of 2m from canopy extremities back to live growth points. Deadwood removal down to a diameter of 25mm. T2 Copper Beech - lift crown over roadway to a consistent height of 5m. Termination at growth points. Reduce crown on Southerly aspect. Prune back extension growth by 2m to growth points to a maximum height of 8m. Deadwood removal within crown down to 25mm diameter

After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Jennings that the Parish Council does not have the expertise to comment and therefore the decision should be left to the planning officer.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

*ACTION: Clerk to notify the planning office*

## **10. Planning Updates**

There were none

## **11. Finance**

### 10.1 Discuss and agree changes to bank mandate

The Clerk confirmed that the bank mandate needed to be updated with previous Councillors Dumbrell, Chorley and Stokes removed. Whilst speaking with the Natwest bank it became apparent that there is a new online banking account which will allow online transactions to be completed with 2 signatories approving each transaction. In order to be eligible for this pilot account the organisation must have no more than 4 signatories registered. The Clerk confirmed that if the 3 councillors mentioned above are removed, then that would leave Cllr Crowe, Brand and the Clerk meaning that we would meet the criteria and could apply.

**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**

It was agreed that the Clerk would remove the previous Councillors to update the bank mandate and check the Council's financial regulations to ensure that the Natwest Bankline Community Account is appropriate. The new account will be an agenda item for the June meeting.

*ACTION: Clerk to update the bank mandate and check Natwest Bankline Community Account is appropriate for the Council.*

**10.2 Bank Reconciliation**

The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Golledge had approved the bank reconciliation which was all in order.

**10.3 Review and Agree Reserved Funds**

The Clerk had presented a list of the current allocated reserves as agreed at the time of setting the budget for the precept at the start of the financial year. As the reserves are more than double our precept this is required as part of the audit process. It was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Brand that the reserves remain appropriate and should be approved.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

**10.4 Review and Agree Asset Register**

The Clerk had circulated the asset register for consideration. It was proposed by Cllr Jennings and seconded by Cllr Robinson that the register was up to date and should be approved.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

**10.5 Review and Agree the Financial Risk Assessment 2021/22**

The Clerk had circulated the Financial Risk Assessment which highlighted some suggested changes for consideration. After discussion it was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Crowe that the suggested changes be implemented.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

*ACTION: Clerk to update*

**10.6 Annual Audit – Agree resolution that Holcombe Parish Council meets the criteria for 2020/21 and wishes to be an exempt authority, not subject to the limited assurance review, for that year. Sign the Certificate of Exemption**

The Clerk had circulated a copy of the Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2020/21 Part 2 prior to the meeting. The certificate was read out by the Clerk when it was confirmed that the Parish Council was able to certify itself as compliant and therefore exempt from having to undertake a limited assurance review. It was proposed by Cllr Crowe and seconded by Cllr Brand that the Certificate of exemption should be signed and dated by the Clerk and by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

**10.7 Consider and approve section 1 of the Audit - Annual Governance statement 2020/21**

The Clerk had circulated a copy of the annual governance statement to all Councillors prior to the meeting. The Clerk read through questions 1 to 9 with the Councillors answering yes to all apart from question 9 which was not applicable. It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Robinson that the statement be signed and dated by the Clerk and by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

**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**

10.8 Consider and approve section 2 of the Audit - Accounting statements 2020/21

A copy of the completed accounting statement which had been signed by the Clerk had been sent to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Crowe that the document was accurate which will be signed and dated by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

*ACTION: Clerk to ensure that the Audit paperwork is submitted on time.*  
*Send Transparency code to all.*

10.9 Parish Council Payments

The following invoices were presented for payment:

Vickie Watts - Salary & Expenses	£ 18.67
Reg Perkins - Church waste bins	£ 57.20
Isaac Gregory - Tree work on the playing field	£2300.00
CPRE - Annual membership	£ 36.00
E-on - Lychgate electricity	£ 63.56
Coleford PC - Clerk training & Ink cartridges	£ 44.72
A Mason - Internal Audit	£ 42.00
Came & Co - Annual insurance	£ 403.74

10.10 Playing Field Payments:

The Clerk confirmed that a payment of £830 had been received in the Holcombe Playing Field account which should have been paid into the Holcombe Hive account and needed to be repaid.

Holcombe Hive	£830.00
---------------	---------

It was proposed by Cllr Jennings and seconded by Cllr Brand that all payments should be made.

**Vote: 5 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions**

**12. Consider quote for tree survey on Holcombe PC Land**

After discussion it was agreed that further investigation should be made to establish what is the legal requirement around tree surveys and what are the required qualifications for any one completing the survey and risk assessments on trees located on Parish Council owned land.

*ACTION: Clerk to make further enquiries*

**13. Consider holding a litter pick on Sunday 30th May**

It was agreed that the Litter pick would be held on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> June at 10am.

*ACTION: Clerk to arrange for equipment and publicise the event.*

**14. Agree meeting dates for 2021/22**

The Clerk had circulated a list of Parish Council meeting dates which Councillors agreed were correct. Clerk to display on the parish notice boards and website.

*ACTION: Clerk to action*

**15. Update on the Playing Field path**

Cllr Brand confirmed that work started on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May and the weather conditions are looking good. At the start of the day, Cllr Brand and the contractor walked the route to mark the path. 100 tonnes of stone have been delivered to the car park courtesy of Rick Massey. The plant and materials will be stored in the car park during the build, which should be completed within 2 weeks. There will be no work completed at the weekend.

**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

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

Playing Field Committee – Next meeting 6th May 2021. Clerk is unable to attend. Cllr Crowe will try to join.

**17. Meetings to attend**

Cllr Jennings and the Clerk attended a virtual meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April hosted by Frome Town Council to give local parishes their views on the way ahead, assuming that one of the two unitary frameworks will be adopted. The principle of removing a level of local government was discussed, with its replacement by Local Community Networks (LCNs). The LCNs would be Town/Parish driven. We need to consider if we wish to be in a LCN including Frome, or if that would submerge us and a village grouping might work better. It was agreed that as starting point a Matrix listing all the services currently provided by all levels of Councils and then suggest what services are provided at what level. A further meeting will be held in a month's time which it was felt we should attend.

*ACTION: Agenda item for future meetings to ensure kept up to date with progress*

**18. Discuss the return of face-to-face meetings**

The Clerk confirmed that the meeting of the Parish is planned for the 25<sup>th</sup> May and the next Parish Council meeting 1<sup>st</sup> June. Both will take place in the Village Hall. The Clerk will liaise with the Hall Committee to establish what procedures will need to be implemented to ensure that everyone will be compliant with covid regulations.

*ACTION: Clerk to liaise with Village Hall committee*

**19. Correspondence**

Grant a Green, to secure green spaces – No action required as Playing Field is protected by the Charity Commission.

Mendip District Council – Email notifying that electors will be given the opportunity to take part in a poll for the future of local government in Somerset – No action required

Countryside Voices magazine – Passed to Cllr Crowe

**20. Next meetings:**

Annual Meeting of the Parish – Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021