

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

**Minutes from Holcombe Parish Council Meeting, which took place on
Tuesday 3rd August 2021 at 7.30 pm at Holcombe Village Hall.**

Councillors Present Cllr Simon Brand (Chair)
Cllr Simon Eade
Cllr Phil Gait
Cllr Sue Robinson
Cllr Fran Dawe-Lane (Attended the meeting via Zoom as self-isolating. She was allowed to take part in any discussion but could not vote.)

In attendance: District Cllr Alan Townsend, County Cllr Mike Pullin
The Clerk, Vickie Watts taking the minutes and 3 members of the public

1. Public forum

1.1 Cllr Gait opened the meeting and explained that on the 16th July, District Cllrs Philip Ham and Alan Townsend, County Cllr Mike Pullin, Somerset Highways engineers, Charlie Higgins and Sara Davies, Cllr Phil Gait, Mr Giles Simmons, Ms Juliet Jawara and the Clerk met at the car park of the Farm Shop to discuss the parking issues.

It was noted that the over flow car parks had alleviated the parking issues but Juliet and Giles expressed concern if they were to close. Charlie and Sara said that the access road could not be painted in the current condition however if the boundaries could be confirmed (which they will look into) and the landlord of the Farmshop is prepared to fund the resurfacing it could then be marked to identify the boundary to highlight that the access must not be blocked.

County Cllr Mike Pullin asked the Somerset Highways representatives if they could extend the 30mph speed limit signs out from the bridge towards Stoke St Michael as he was concerned about the speed cars are passing the car park and pub. A request was also made for the missing pedestrian sign on Edford Hill to be replaced.

1.2 Cllr Gait said that the Common Lane sign is missing. Clerk to request a new sign be installed.

1.3 Cllr Eade said that there had been an accident involving a tractor and a truck at Stoke Bottom, which was in part caused by the overgrown hedges making it difficult for larger vehicles to pass. This is also particularly bad on Charlton Road between Hollydene and The Old School. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the landowners and request that the hedges be cut back to allow access for larger vehicles.

Action: Clerk to request a new sign for Common Lane and write to land owners to request hedges be cut back.

2. Resignation / Co-option of Councillors

A letter of resignation had been received from Cllr Crowe after the last meeting, with immediate effect.

Action: Clerk to notify Mendip District Council of the resignation and prepare the notice of vacancy.

3. Appointment of Chairman

Cllr Gait proposed that Cllr Brand should be Chairman which was seconded by Cllr Robinson. Cllr Brand accepted the appointment.

Vote: 3 For, 0 Against & 1 Abstentions

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Cllr Brand proposed a letter of thanks be sent to Cllr Crowe thanking him for the 4.5 years as Chairman. He said that he had laid solid foundations on which the Parish Council can continue to build on.

Action: Cllr Brand to draft a letter of thanks to Graham Crowe

Cllr Brand signed the acceptance of office form which was witnessed by the Proper Officer.

Cllr Brand asked Councillors to remain after the public meeting ended for a brief discussion about his vision for the Parish.

4. Apologies for absence

Cllr Golledge and District Cllr Ham sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

5. Declaration of interests and dispensations

There were none.

6. Approve Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st June 2021

The abovementioned minutes had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Eade that they accurately reflected the meeting and should therefore be signed by the Chair.

Vote: 4 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to upload to the website

7. 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:

As agreed, Cllr Gait, Brand and the Clerk met with representatives of the Holcombe Hive regarding the Music Event which will be held on the Playing Field on Sat 18th September. The Temporary Event Notice has already been approved by Mendip District Council licensing department. It was agreed that the Parish Council would apply to Mendip District Council planning department requesting an exemption to allow for the car park to be made available between 8pm and midnight. It was believed that it would be less disruptive to use the car park than for performers and volunteers to park on the surrounding roads. A letter has been sent to local residents likely to be affected by this change notifying them of the plan and rationale behind the decision.

The Clerk confirmed that she had spoken with District Councillor Philip Ham regarding the request made at the last meeting asking for the Duke public house to be made an Asset of Community Value (ACV). He has suggested that the Clerk speaks with the relevant officer at Mendip District Council for more information on the criteria and process.

Action: Clerk to investigate further and report back to the Council.

8. Reports

8.1 PCSO – The monthly newsletter had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting but it was noted that the report was generic rather than specific to Holcombe.

Action: It was agreed that the Clerk would request a more detailed PCSO report relating to Holcombe like we have received in the past.

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The Clerk confirmed that the PACT meetings will resume at the end of the summer.

8.2 Mendip District Council report

District Cllr Townsend and Ham provided the following joint report:

Unitary – The Secretary of State has published his decision that the Unitary Council will be the One Somerset model covering the whole county rather than the Stronger Somerset proposal for separate East and West Somerset unitaries. The next legal steps are

- Parliamentary approval to be arranged Dec-Jan
- Elections for new Unitary Council May 2022
- Unitary Council Vesting Day 1st April 2023

We need to consider the roles our parishes wish to take in the new Local Community Networks. Holcombe are not currently included in the preparatory matrix of responsibilities being prepared by Frome Town Council. It was agreed that it would be circulated to all Councillors.

Planning – Last week’s Planning Board considered 3 large applications for 345 houses on the Keyford side of Frome. The decision was deferred to give the developers the chance to improve their offers. If approved they will contribute significantly towards rectifying Mendip’s 5-year housing shortfall. Members received a formal briefing from the developers of the ‘Selwood Garden Community’ which could bring a further 1700 houses to the south west corner of Frome. The formal application is imminent.

For the updated Local Plan Part 2 the Inspector’s Final Report missed the re-scheduled date of the end of July, though formal adoption is still planned for the end of September. A draft document is expected in time for the Gladman appeal for the 63 houses at Coleford which is still programmed to start on 18th August on a virtual basis.

Recycling – Somerset Waste Partnership continue to have problems in Mendip, due largely to Covid and staff shortages. Has Holcombe experienced any major issues?

Highways – Duke of Cumberland – a site meeting was held with County Highways on 16th July. The overflow car park and improved signage have improved matters and a way ahead was agreed which will involve some resurfacing work to allow the public highway of Barlake Lane to be clearly marked.

Stoke Bottom – Some limited markings for repairs have appeared. These are totally inadequate, Highways have been challenged and have agreed to re-inspect, and also to approach Pennys again about edge erosion

8.3 Somerset County Council

County Cllr Mike Pullin confirmed that he had emailed his report to the Clerk, which would be circulated to all. It read as follows:

Coronavirus infection rates: As at 30th July the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 26,526 (up from 20,982 on 25th June) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 802. The rate per 100,000 stands at 206.9 (47.1) for Somerset with Mendip at 234.5 (40.7), Sedgemoor at 195.7 (74.7), South Somerset 214.4 (20.8) and SW&T at 187.0 (58.7). The number of total deaths across the County is currently 40% below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 1.3 and 1.5.

Despite significant progress and even for those who have had both jabs it is vitally important to remember, to observe Hands-Face-Space and to Ventilate indoor areas at all times.

Road map out of lockdown: It is expected that the final lifting of restrictions including the need to self-isolate will be removed from 16th August 2021.

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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 programme roll-out: Somerset continues to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing over 93.7% of the adult population having had one dose of vaccine and 77.4% having had both doses. Work continues to encourage further take up particularly amongst younger adults and a real focus on ensuring the second vaccine to this group.

Local Government Reorganisation: The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has delivered his decision on which unitary council business cases met his three tests and will therefore be progressed through Parliament. A single unitary met all of his clear tests including the ability to improve local government and services.

It is expected that the orders will be laid before Parliament in the late Autumn and a vesting date of the new authority as April 2023. Work with partners will now commence to progress through the transition period.

Cllr Pullin said that it might be worth speaking with Marcel Hayden from St Cuthbert Out Parish Council who has been considering how the Local Community Networks might work within the new Unitary Council.

Tick warning: With the warmer weather come ticks, which thrive in woodland, long grass and even urban parks. SCC has put together a 'tick list' to follow to reduce the risk of being bitten including: Walking on clearly defined paths, wearing light coloured clothing, using an insect repellent, wearing long trousers and long-sleeved tops to reduce the skin exposure and carrying out a regular tick check after outdoor activities. Being bitten by a tick doesn't usually require hospital treatment but people are advised to dial NHS 111 if they start to feel unwell.

County-wide Bus Services: Following the Government's announcement in March of the new National Bus Strategy – 'Bus Back Better' a £3 billion pot of funding is being made available to improve bus services across the country and Somerset County Council can bid for a share of this in partnership with operators. But first, the Council needs to know about residents' experience and where the gaps in services are. You can take the survey at <https://somerset.inconsult.uk/somerset.bus.survey/consultationHome>

Reflections of the pandemic: The Somerset Library Service is inviting people to share their experiences of the last sixteen months, to be recorded for future generations. As part of 'Reflections', a county-wide creative response to the pandemic, libraries will host a series of free drop-in sessions throughout August and online via social media. The collaborative artwork and film will be given to the South West Heritage Trust as a 'record' of the experiences of Somerset people during the pandemic. The film and artwork will then be showcased at the evening 'Reflections' event to be held on the 10 September. This initiative forms part of Somerset Libraries' response to initiative, funded by The BBC and Arts Council England.

Summer holidays school meals support: The Department of Work and Pensions has extended its Covid Local Support Grant, providing £1.4m to Somerset County Council who will use the grant to fund food vouchers worth £15 per week for children eligible for Free School Meals over the six-week Summer Holidays. SCC has been working to tackle holiday hunger during the pandemic, providing funding for food and vouchers over the October, February, and May half-term periods, as well as the Christmas and Easter holidays.

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Forecast heat wave: Many forecasters are expecting temperatures to rise again in August and so Somerset's Public Health have issued the following important advice:

Look out for others, especially older people, young children and babies and those with underlying health conditions. Stay cool indoors: open windows when the air feels cooler outside than inside; shade or cover windows exposed to direct sunlight; move to a cooler part of the house, especially for sleeping. Keep drinks within easy reach – water is better than sugary or caffeinated drinks for staying hydrated. Avoid excess alcohol. Never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially infants, young children or animals. Try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm.

National Recognition: Somerset County Council has been shortlisted for three prestigious national awards in recognition of its work during the coronavirus pandemic. The categories include; 'Best Workforce Transformation' for its redeployment work during the pandemic, 'Community Heroes' for the work of Community Council for Somerset's Village and Community Agents, and 'Delivering Better Outcomes' for Somerset's Micro-providers, independent care providers who proved a lifeline for Somerset's isolated rural population throughout the pandemic.

Cllr Pullin said that if the Parish Council wanted to help fund any Small Improvement Scheme, like dropped kerbs then the project was far more likely to happen.

9. Planning Applications

There were none.

10. Planning Updates

2020/1950/VRC - 2 Sunnyholme, Charlton Road BA3 5EW - Breach of Condition 1 of 2017/2056/FUL (Development not in accordance with the approved plans) A member of the public had contacted Mendip District Council Enforcement Office regarding a potential breach in building contrary to approved plans. The Parish Council has been copied into the correspondence.

11. Finance

11.1 Bank Reconciliation – The Clerk had prepared the reconciliation and passed to Cllr Golledge to review, which she had found to be in order.

11.2 Update on the Somerset County Councils offer of funding from the Climate Emergency Fund
The Clerk said that an email had been received which explained that Somerset County Council had provided additional funding to the fund and had reviewed applications which had previously been rejected, which had resulted in an offer being made to Holcombe PC for the tree planting scheme.

The Clerk was to meet with Cllr Golledge to review the application and liaise with Somerset County Council to secure the grant and deliver the project.

Action: Cllr Golledge to progress the application

11.3 Parish Council Payments:

The following invoices were presented for payment:

V Watts – Salary £433.61 and Expenses £21.23	£454.84
Somerset Association of Local Councils	£274.32
Society of Local Council Clerks	£ 46.25

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11.4 Playing Field Payments:

The Playing Field invoices had been agreed by the Playing Field committee for payment so would be signed after the meeting.

Came and Co – Annual Insurance

£843.54

It was proposed by Cllr Gait and seconded by Cllr Robinson that the invoices for both the Parish Council and the Playing Field should be paid.

Vote: 4 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions

12. Consider approval of the memorial application from Forsey & Son for R Rushton

The memorial headstone application received from Forsey and Son for Richard Rushton had been circulated to all Councillors for consideration. It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Gait that as the proposed headstone detail was within the required specifications that it should be approved.

Vote: 4 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions

Action: Clerk to notify the applicant

13. Update on Parish Allotments

Bob Simpson attended the meeting and said that there was now a total of 12 residents that had expressed an interest in having a Parish allotment. He confirmed that he had looked at approximately 10 sites which were suitable, accessible and appeared to be underutilised. The next step would be to approach landowners. He asked how many plots we would want and what our statutory obligations were in obtaining the land; it was agreed that the size should be approx. 1 – 2 acres and landowners in the village would be approached in the first instance to ask whether they have any land they would be willing to be used for this purpose. It was agreed that Mr Simpson would speak with Leigh on Mendip Parish Council who had recently created new allotments which had proved extremely successful.

Cllr Brand said that Mr Simpson could speak with landowners on an informal basis but any correspondence must come from the Parish Clerk. It was agreed that Mr Simpson would draft a piece for inclusion in the September edition of On the Map asking landowners whether they have a suitable parcel of land which is underutilised and could be suitable for allotments, which would be sent to the Clerk for approval and submission.

Action: Clerk to submit to OTM

14. Update on Highway matters and report new issues

The Clerk confirmed that Sara Davies of Somerset Highways had replied to the letter written by Cllr Crowe which highlighted how the lack of dropped kerbs is impacting on residents who had to rely on mobility scooters to move around the village. The letter referred to the Disability Act and Equality Act and how something should be done to rectify the problem. The response reconfirmed that it would have to be dealt with as a Small Improvement Scheme when the scheme reopens.

The Clerk has since sent the letter and response to Alyn Jones who is the lead Somerset Councillor for Highway asking for his support.

The Clerk reported that there had been a request via Facebook asking for the mobile police enforcement unit to attend the village which generated 50 subsequent comments and suggestions on how the issues surrounding speeding in the village should be dealt with. The Clerk was concerned that after 12 years Parishioners were making the same complaints and suggestions despite the

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Council's best efforts to make a difference. It was agreed that a review of all outstanding highway issues and communication with Somerset Highways would be completed by the council with a view to determining the way ahead to address these issues.

Action: Agenda item for future meeting

15. Somerset Bus Back Better – Complete Feedback Form

Cllr Golledge had attended recent meetings regarding the bus service and how it might be improved with Somerset County Council funding. It was agreed that Cllr Golledge would complete the feedback form and circulate to all Councillors for further points to be included if required before submission on the 15th August.

*Action: Cllr Golledge to complete to feedback form and circulate to all for comment
Clerk to submit before the 15th August.*

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

Village Hall – The Clerk had been in touch with a company regarding the installation of solar panels for the village hall roof. The Village Hall Committee have since been in touch to say that this cannot be progressed as it is likely to invalidate the warranty for the roof.

17. Review and adopt the following policies:

- 17.1 Financial regulations
- 17.2 Communications and social media policy
- 17.3 Complaint's procedure
- 17.4 Freedom of Information publication scheme

The Clerk had circulated the abovementioned policies to all Councillors prior to the meeting for review. It was noted that Somerset Association of Local Council have not updated the abovementioned policies in the last 12 months and they should therefore be approved.

It was proposed by Cllr Brand and seconded by Cllr Robinson that all 4 policies should be approved.

Vote: 4 For, 0 Against & 0 Abstentions

18. Meetings/Training to attend

The Clerk will circulate any training dates as and when they are set. New Councillors were encouraged to attend the Councillor Essential training and Planning at the earliest opportunity as the content will be helpful in fulfilling their role.

Clerk to book Cllr Brand on to the next available Chairman training session.

District Cllr Townsend asked if Holcombe Parish Council wished to send a representative to the Gladman Appeal which will take place in September. Cllr Brand confirmed that he would register so that he could attend.

Action: Clerk to make booking. Cllr Brand to register attendance for Gladman Appeal

19. Correspondence

The Countryside Charity and Clerk and Council Direct magazine had been received.

Both passed to Cllr Gait to be read and promptly passed on to the next Councillor on the reading list.

20. Next meetings:

Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 5th October 2021

Meeting finished 20.38hrs

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