

# HUIISH CHAMPFLOWER PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish held on :- Thursday 14th May 2024 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall

**Present** Stephen Kimsey (SK) (Chair), Mary Abel (MA), Dot Hayward (DH), Sarah Payne (SPa), Steve Powles, Stephen Pugsley, Marc Vyvyan-Jones, Chris Chanter, Frances Nicholson

**Members of the public:-** Caroline Pearce and Sharon Varney

Meeting started at 7:33 pm

**Action**

		<b>Action</b>
1	<b>Apologies</b> Louise Cooke	
2	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> on 9th May 2023 where there were no residents attended and no issues raised. Minutes were agreed as accurate.	
3	<b>Matters arising-</b> none	
4/5	<p><b>Parish Report from the Chairman Stephen Kimsey.</b> Over the last 12 months the Parish Council has continued the long tradition of representing, protecting, and when necessary, supporting, the interests of residents to our best ability, whether that be in relation to planning, highways, footpaths or other matters.</p> <p>As Chair I must firstly express the gratitude of the Parish Council and the rest of our community to the extremely valuable work undertaken by our Parish Clerk. From dealing with correspondence and communicating with agencies, to handling finances, obtaining VAT refunds and arranging and preparing meetings – Dorothy is very much the lynchpin of the Parish Council. We all thank you.</p> <p>I also need to repeat a previous message of gratitude to fellow Parish Councillor Louise Cooke for all her work and effort in relation to the new playground equipment.</p> <p>The whole Parish is also very grateful to those responsible for the on-going maintenance of the flowers by each of the Village signs.</p> <p>Perhaps the most important decision the Parish Council made in the last year relates to the increase in the Parish precept. Residents will have seen what appears at first glance to be an alarming percentage increase in the precept on the Council Tax bills, though the actual value increase remains very low.</p> <p>The difficult decision to raise the precept was driven by the emergence of the Somerset Council financial emergency during the latter part of last year and their subsequent so-called consultations basically suggesting that many of the few non-statutory services we receive as a rural parish will be stopped unless Parishes are able to provide funding.</p> <p>Examples of services under threat and of immediate interest to our residents include – recycling centres, maintenance of highways and verges outside of statutory requirements and provision of road grit for winter.</p> <p>The Parish Council is required to set the precept by the end of January, whilst Somerset Council has until the end of February. Given the low Parish Council</p>	

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precept and the apparent likelihood that comparatively significant additional funds will be needed to ensure residents receive the level of service expected, Parish Councillors reluctantly agreed to the increase.

As we now know, Somerset Council has and continues, to defer decisions as to which services are to be devolved. Indeed, they have not even produced any guide to possible costs – though we are promised a Parish Price List from the Highways department in August.

The Parish Council hopes that by collaborating with other Parishes as part of the Exmoor LCN group, the services we want and need to continue will be affordable from the current budget.

The Exmoor LCN consists of 23 parishes from across the Somerset part of Exmoor – stretching from Porlock across to us. The group is proving to be a great success and has provided much of the basis for the establishment of similar groupings across the rest of the County.

I want to acknowledge and express our gratitude to our County Councillors – Frances Nicholson and Steven Pugsley for their hard work and the valued support they so frequently provide – both in relation to The Exmoor LCN and us as a small rural Parish.

Though our Parish continues to be in reasonably good shape there do remain – as there will always be – challenges to face.

In the coming years and in addition to how we manage, fund and deal with devolved services, we need to tackle a variety of issues including –

- Protecting our environment and landscape from new development
- Ensuring highways, bridleways and footpaths remain accessible and safe – including swift reporting of potholes, flooding issues or unsafe rights of way
- General maintenance, such as repair or replacement of the ageing Village Notice Boards as well as possibly a few grit bins.

I also suggest that the Parish Council needs to explore how the relationship between absentee landowners and the community can be better managed to avoid unnecessary disagreement.

I am sure I speak for all Parish Councillors when I say that it is an honour and a privilege to serve on Huish Champflower Parish Council. We are so very fortunate to live here and should never take what we have and enjoy for granted.

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6	<p><b>Other matters raised by the public</b></p> <p><b>Road closures</b> and closures announced that don't happen meaning residents taking time off work due to long diversions and when they don't happen residents are unaware. Somerset Council are now starting to prosecute if companies don't turn up or give no notice.</p> <p>In addition sometimes the closure signs are so far away you don't know where they are, an indication of the location of closure needs to be made clear. If any of these issues happen they can be reported to the companies or via the Somerset Council website.</p> <p>We have seen an increase in total road closures and less traffic light systems. This is largely due to cars being bigger, faster and there is more road rage, which is an issue for road workers and their health and safety. Complaints have been made and not allowing emergency vehicles through is a danger for residents. The link to the One network is already on the website and DH is to put the link on Facebook, where residents can set up their own alerts.</p> <p><b>Tanners dip</b> needs to be chased up again with the water board, it was repaired but this did not fix the issue.</p> <p><b>Road Sweeping</b>-why do we need this? There are concerns about the service from the Somerset Councillors. We don't know when they are coming, and exactly what they are doing. We could do with some photos and dates and times of vehicles</p> <p>Kier is the new highways contractor and there are some transition issues</p> <p>Verge cutting in some areas there are safety issues</p> <p><b>Absent landlords</b> concerns especially the field adjacent to the Barton and opposite the church. There is no maintenance by the owners, nothing to do with tenant farmers.</p> <p><b>Septic tank scheme.</b> DH to send regulations to SV. This comes from a European Water Quality directive from before we left the EU. SPu and FN are looking for confirmation from Somerset Council. DH to send a newspaper article to SPu. Reassurance from Somerset Council would be very reassuring for residents.</p> <p>People using the playing fields as a dog exercising area, DH to take this up with the village hall committee.</p>	<p>DH</p> <p>DH</p> <p>DH</p> <p>DH</p>
7	<p><b>Closed meeting at 8:35</b></p>	