

MINUTES OF CROSCOMBE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held at the Church Rooms, Church Street

on

Tuesday 09 May, 2023, at 6:30 pm

Present: Cllrs Kate Egan, Sarah Fawcett-Fice, Annette Ford, Ben Gudzelak, Chris Jackson, Mick Rogers, Hilary Shergold (Chairman)

Attending: Cllrs. B Height and M Lovell (Somerset Council)
J McGhee (Parish Clerk)
10 members of the public

1. Welcome and Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and then delivered her annual report, attached as **Appendix 1** to these minutes.

2. Feedback from Parishioners and Discussion

Parishioners were invited by the Chairman to provide feedback. A number of points were made and discussed, and actions instigated.

Concern was raised about the number of vehicles now travelling through the village and in particular the number of very large lorries. This had been raised as an issue and considered by the Council repeatedly in the past. This will be raised again at the next meeting of the Council's Traffic Working Group who will liaise with Somerset Council to consider what can be done. It was noted that a 20 mph speed limit is in place in the village but certainly not routinely observed; Cllr Lovell of Somerset Council undertook to present to Crocombe Parish Council at

its next full council meeting on what needs to happen to help identify and enforce a 20 mph limit throughout the village. This will be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

The terms of reference and composition of Parish Council working groups will be reviewed at the next council meeting.

Some concern was raised about the way in which the parish meeting was publicised. The Chairman advised that it had been publicised in the regular way on the standard notice boards, on multiple Facebook pages and via an email list. Other possibilities such as notices on telegraph poles were suggested. The Council undertook to re-assess the best practical way to reach as many of the parishioners with notices as is practicable.

One member of the public remarked that the Council had been rather quiet in the past year. The Chairman highlighted in her report that the past year had been a relatively quiet period of consolidation, and that the development of the parish plan will be picked up again following the recruitment of the new clerk. A questionnaire will be finalised and will go out to all parishioners. The results will be collated and used to finalise the parish plan which will be presented at another parish meeting later in the year, probably in November. Every effort will be made to ensure all parishioners and groups are aware and invited well in advance.

It was remarked that the Parish Council may have done more to mark the coronation of King Charles III. There was an event in the Village Hall where parishioners were able to have some food and drink and share the viewing of the ceremony on a big screen, and the Orchard Group which operates under Parish Council auspices held a picnic in the orchard adjacent to the Croscombe Cemetery on Thrupe Lane to mark the event.

A comment was made on the apparent lack of use of the allotment behind the village hall.

Council will get in touch with Croscombe Primary School, whose responsibility it is, to see what plans are in place to redevelop use of the allotment and what assistance can be provided.

Meeting closed 7:10 pm

Appendix 1 to Croscombe Annual Parish Meeting 09 May 2023

Chairman's Report

It has been a relatively quiet year for the parish council. Predominantly the year has been devoted to consolidation of existing projects. In no particular order -

- The replacement of essential play area equipment was completed and has been received and used enthusiastically by the children that use it.
- The orchard trees are now established. Dinder estates were perturbed by the large draw on their water reserves and water for the site will now come from stand-alone rainwater containers.
- All areas that the council are responsible for have been regularly maintained. The school requested that we take on the grass cutting for the half of the school playing field where the play area is situated which will become an additional maintenance expense.
- The cemetery's burial area's depth was discovered to be challenging for double burials so bar existing reserved sites burials will now move to the left of the existing path in front of the cremations site.
- Planning decisions are now reinstated to full council discussion.
- All councillors now receive all notices. Dissemination to specific working parties who then reported back to council is no longer common practice.
- A parish plan consultation was started but was postponed because the dissemination and collection of questionnaires needed a full-time clerk and our previous one resigned at the start of the year.
- We have since been lucky to recruit and welcome a new clerk – Joe McGhee.

Future strategies discussed have been.

1. To investigate and undertake a Phase 2 of additional playground equipment.
2. To reinstate the preparation for a parish plan which will proceed with the support of the new clerk.
3. To aim to restrict spending by the council to rebuild council reserves so that potential long term and expensive projects can be underwritten. Such projects may well be highlighted via parish plan results.

Over the years, past councils have done a great deal to enhance and protect the infrastructure and therefore the living conditions of parishioners to an extent that there are few glaring omissions that people can identify as needing addressing.

But I think it is worth noting that parish councils are not powerful enough to change areas that sometimes significantly impinge upon parishioners' lives, for example, traffic speed, public transport, environmental issues (the list can be infinite!)

What we can do is advise and facilitate between agencies that do have those powers, notably the new unitary authority, and, in most cases that is done through the clerk on our behalf.

Under the Localism Act (2011) we do not have GPC – General Powers of Competence - which would give us more ability to improve the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of the community. This is something that may well become a discussion item for future meetings.

To conclude, I would like to thank all councillors for their service and hard work. We welcome our new clerk and look forward to working with his support to continue to preserve and maintain the Croscombe way of life.