

MINUTES OF CROSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Held at the Church Rooms, Church Street

on

Tuesday 14th January 2024, at 7:00 pm

Present: Cllrs L Tully, A Hargraves (Chair), B Gudzelak, C Jackson, P Hodge, L Tully
Attending: Debbie Widdows (Parish Clerk) J McGhee; 1 member of the public

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair informed everyone of the resignation of the current Parish Clerk J McGhee.

2. PUBLIC FORUM

Nothing was raised.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE; ABSENCES

Apologies were received from Cllr J Owen, Cllr A Ford and Cllr M Lovell.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e).

(NB - this does not preclude any later declarations).

There were none.

5. CONFIRMATION OF RECRUITMENT OF NEW CLERK

Debbie Widdows introduced herself and was welcomed by the Committee.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- i. To confirm and sign minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 3 December 2024 (Appendix 1).

Resolved. Confirmed.

7. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There were none

8. FINANCE

- i. To approve (or not) bank account reconciliation at 06 Jan 25 (Appendix 2).

Resolved. Approved.

- ii. To approve (or not) receipts and payments identified in cashflow from 15 Oct 24 to 06 Jan 25 (Appendix 3).

Resolved: Approved.

- iii. To approve (or not) budget review to 31 Dec 24 (Appendix 4).

Resolved: Approved and signed.

- iv. To approve (or not) paid clerk hours for month of January – 12 hours for J McGhee, 20 hours for D Widdows.

Resolved: Approved.

- v. To approve (or not) draft budget for 2025-26 and set precept for 2025-26 (Appendix 5).

Given the lack of detail provided by Somerset Council (SC) to help inform CPC decision-making (e.g. which services would not be provided by SC and which services would not be provided by SC, and the associated cost and performance parameters), the CPC agreed that it would increase the CPC precept for 2025/26 by no more than 10%.

Resolved: Approved. Clerk to send to Somerset Council.

9. CLERK'S REPORT

- i. To note Clerk's Report (Appendix 4).

Resolved. Noted.

10. LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT

- i. To note report from Cllr Lovell of Somerset Council (Appendix 5).

The report had been sent to Councillors previously by Cllr Lovell.

Resolved. Noted.

11. WORKING GROUP UPDATES

- i. Flood Group

Cllr Hodge provided an update since their last meeting.

Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) are not going to co-ordinate anymore. There will be a meeting with the Environment Agency, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Service Director of Bridges and Officer from SRA.

There are stones in the river which are blocking the culvert. These need to be removed. Cllr Hodge sought advice from Cllr Tessa Munt to increase the capacity of the culvert. It was suggested that sections of it needed to be improved or it needed to be opened up.

Cllr Owen was now Senior Co-Ordinator of the Flood Group.

Walkie Talkies were due to be delivered this week and they would be kept in the publ. These were donated by Sandersons. They would be put in the asset register.

Clerk to draft a letter of thanks to Sandersons.

- ii. Orchard Group

Cllr Hargraves reported that he had written a report of the results of the 2024 Orchard Survey) and shared it with the CPC councillors and now sought a CPC decision regarding the set of 11 recommendations and actions from the report:

34/24-25

1. Discussion take place with the farmer who leases the field regarding expansion of the orchard. The previous parish clerk suggested that should the lease for the field be changed then the farmer would likely need a season's notice.

Action: Cllr Hargraves meet with the farmer to discuss the proposed expansion of the community orchard.

2. The CPC approves the 50% area expansion of the Community Orchard on condition that beforehand:-

a. The current and proposed design and layout of the orchard (and its expansion) are assessed in writing by the reputable tree specialist.

b. Any associated remedial work suggested by said tree specialist is shared with the CPC and if agreed by the CPC, is then carried out by the OWG.

Action: Following 2b above, discussions take place between Dinder Estates (DE) and Cllr Hargraves to secure DE approval of the 50% expansion of the Community Orchard.

3. A copy of Cllr Hargraves's report be posted on the CPC website.

Action: Croscombe Parish Clerk.

4. The OWG work with the Village Hall Committee to seek and consider ways of holding some Community Orchard fund-raising events at the Village Hall, and report back to the CPC.

Action: OWG.

The OWG work with the Village Hall Committee and the School Headmaster to consider permission and use of the playing field for some Orchard related events (e.g. parish picnics) and report back to the CPC.

Action: OWG

5. On a quarterly basis, a schedule of maintenance be developed by the OWG and presented in advance for CPC approval and for subsequent posting on the CPC website.

Action: OWG.

6. The OWG Terms of reference be reviewed by the CPC and the OWG, and where necessary any changes be submitted for CPC approval.

Action: CPC and OWG.

7. On a quarterly basis, the OWG develop a schedule of Events and present it in advance for CPC approval and posting on the CPC website.

Action: OWG.

8. Routine maintenance activities of the Community Orchard no longer be considered a fund-raising event that requires CPC prior approval, except where financial expenditure is required.

9. Alternative pedestrian access routes to the Community Orchard be explored in order to seek to obviate the need to access the Community Orchard via Thrupe Lane and so reduce the risk of pedestrians travelling along Thrupe Lane to gain access to the Community Orchard.

Action: OWG.

10. The Community Orchard continue to be maintained by trained volunteers, augmented by contractors only where necessary. It was confirmed that the previous Parish Clerk had included the Community Orchard grass cutting in the contract with Shepton Mallet Landscapes. Cllr Tully reported that watering during the dry weather was undertaken by volunteers. Further work was undertaken to repair benches.

Work continues.

Action: OWG.

11. Whilst acknowledging the restrictions for use of the unused parts of the field, consideration be made by the CPC to other uses for the rest of the field.

Action: CPC.

A series of questions had been issued to the OWG regarding design, planning and maintenance of the Community Orchard and the proposal to hold further events.

Cllr Tully in response, presented a verbal update to the questions on behalf of the OWG -

Given some concerns have been expressed regarding the spacing of some of the trees, the CPC seeks reassurance in writing that the design and layout of the trees are sound and thus seek a Tree Specialist's approval of the Current and Proposed design and layout of the orchard. The OWG will engage Cllr Tully's brother to carry out this assessment.

1. Whilst the rootstock details for the orchard have been lost, it is assumed that as the rootstock for the orchard trees are all regular, there is unlikely to be a problem with the spacing - but this will be addressed in the proposed assessment (see 1 above).
2. Plan and schedule for the 2024 Orchard Survey - completed.
3. Development of the 6 months look ahead maintenance plan - in progress. Cllr Tully reported that the OWG had carried out repairs on some of the benches and some tree sponsors had carried out some pruning of 'their' trees. This opened a discussion seeking clarification on ownership of the trees which led to the CPC conclusion that as the trees were planted on Croscombe land then the trees are owned by the Croscombe parish and thus the responsibility for their maintenance lies with the CPC, which in turn has been delegated to the OWG. It was noted that further work is required to understand the contractual nature of the purchase of the trees and to clarify ownership.

Action: Cllrs Hargraves and Tully, and the OWG Chair.

4. Development of the 6 months look ahead Events plan - in progress. Cllr Tully reported that the OWG awaited the CPC's decision on future Events. See 7 above.
5. Cllr Tully reported that the following fund-raising events had taken place:-
 - a) October 6th, 2022 - Pruning
 - b) May 7th, 2023 - Coronation event (tree planting, picnic and auction)
 - c) Aug 13th, 2023 - Summer Event (picnic and auction)
 - d) Oct 22nd, 2023 - Autumn Event (picnic)
 - e) Jun 23rd, 2024 - Summer Event (picnic and auction)
 - f) Sept 29th, 2024 - Apple pressing (held at Cllr Tully's home)
6. Impact of proposed orchard expansion and OWG plans on the leaser of the field for animal grazing - see 11ii 1 above.
7. How to confirm survey respondents do live in the parish?

Action: superseded.

8. How to ensure duplicate responses included in the survey?

Action: superseded.

How to increase interest in the orchard and the survey?

Action: superseded

After due deliberation the CPC approved all 11 recommendations subject to the associated actions above, and thus on this basis the proposed expansion of the Community Orchard was approved by the CPC.

iii. Play Area Group

There was some money left over from the golf and football fund raising. It would be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting what they would upgrade to next, perhaps a more formal basketball court or a solar powered stopwatch.

12. UPDATES ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- i. Send email to appropriate parties communicating Croscombe Parish Council's views on the proposed path linking Hanwood Viaduct to Thrupe Lane (Cllr Lovell, Somerset Council).

This was done and marked by a green line.

- ii. Consider and provide views on Somerset Day 2025 (All).

There was no real enthusiasm for this.

- iii. Liaise with M Dowell to review notice boards and recommend actions; remove notice board from Boards Lane (Cllr Jackson).

i. Mr Dowell reviewed them. The one on the green needs a new board.

ii. Board Lane needed replacing (put on hold at the moment)

iii. The one outside the wood burner store (old village shop) can be repaired.

iv. The one at the bus stop has not been looked at yet. This would be done in the spring.

v. Advice on a replacement cost would be sought from by Cllr Tully.

- iv. Review securing small gate at cemetery and remove if necessary (Cllr Jackson).

This had been tied back.

- v. Progress redevelopment of general emergency plan (Cllr Owen).

There was a talk organised in Stoke St Michael which Cllr Owen may want to attend. The Clerk would send him details about it.

- vi. Issue email with councillor expenses guidelines (Clerk).

This had been done.

- vii. Publish updated (unchanged) schedule of cemetery charges (Clerk).

This had been done.

- viii. Procure Fayreway street sign (Clerk).

This had been done.

13. MATTERS OF REPORT – ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Date of next meeting – Tuesday, 25th February, at 7:00pm in the Church Rooms.

CLOSE