

# Minutes of the Cutcombe Parish Council Annual Meeting of Electors 7.00pm on Tuesday 25 May 2021 at the Moorland Hall

**Present:** Fifteen members of the parish were in attendance. Councillors V. White (Chairman), R. Webber (Vice Chairman), J. Anson, J. Davis, R. Foxwell, E. Norman and C. Rooke were present from Cutcombe Parish Council with Cllrs F. Nicholson (County Council) and S. Pugsley (District Council) also present. J Grenville, Clerk to the Parish Council was present. Bryan Stevens and Jo Dawkins represented the Police.

The Chairman welcomed all present, thanking them for their attendance during the difficult circumstances of the Covid pandemic.

**1. Apologies for Absence.** None had been received.

**2. Chairman's Annual Report.** Councillor White had taken up the position of Chairman following the resignation in February of John Anson who had chaired the Parish Council (PC) ably throughout the extremely trying circumstances of the Covid pandemic. The pandemic had halted village events, including the fete and Snowdrop Valley. Nevertheless, there were many positive outcomes for the PC to report. Thanks to efforts by Linda Atkinson and Cllr Anson, the empty space at the public toilet block had been converted to tenanted business premises with a three-year lease, creating more efficient use of the asset. The PC had also planted a replacement British Oak Millennium Tree on the public Recreation Ground at Wheddon Cross which served also to commemorate all of those who had suffered throughout the pandemic. In addition, three Chrome book computers had been donated to the Cutcombe First School to assist with remote learning during lockdown.

Cllr White thanked all of the Councillors for their efforts during the year noting the commitment from the District and County Councillors who attended meetings regularly. Thanks were also recorded for Nicola Kemp who had served as Parish Clerk for the majority of the year.

**3. 2020-21 Financial Summary.** The new Clerk introduced herself. Noting that the figures for the year end are still in draft form and yet to be audited, she reported Receipts for the year of £25,850 made up of: £13,944 for the precept; £10,000 Covid grant; £550 donations for the public toilets and, a generous donation of £200 from a parishioner towards the cost of the costs of the Millennium Tree. Expenditure totalled £18,292 including: £15,115 on general expenses and salary costs of £3,177. There had been no Snowdrop Valley event this year. Combined balances at the bank at the year end stood at £56,220.

**4. Community Policing Report.** The representatives gave a comprehensive account of Policing activities over the past year dealing with at least one incident within the parish every week, varying from Covid-related call outs to stock obstructing highways. Only two significant crimes were reported. Many anonymous calls were received, particularly in respect to Covid breaches, however this meant that it was not possible to give reassurance that, in the majority of cases, the rules were being adhered to. The importance of community support in assisting the Police with their work was emphasized; an example was quoted of an attempted break in to vehicles at the market site which was foiled following reporting and assistance from a local leading to a subsequent court case. Concerns were raised about the enforcement of speed limits in the village and the Police gave examples of their assistance in setting up local community speed watch groups. Thanks were offered to the Community Policing team for all of their work in the local community.

**5. Discussion Item – 20 mile per hour speed limit request.** Parishioners voiced their concerns about unsafe speeds in Cutcombe around the ring taking in Popery, Higher and Lower Park Lanes. They spoke with great feeling about the perceived dangers to children, the elderly and household pets, speculating that it was simply a matter of time until someone was injured. With Covid lockdown the volume of traffic had increased significantly, making the problem worse. Several incidents and near misses were described. Linda Atkins, a former Parish Councillor, had presented a petition with over 60 parishioners' signatures to the Highways Department (County Council) requesting a reduction to 20 mph around the ring over a year ago. She expressed her disappointment that no progress had been made. Costs of potentially £10k, which the PC would have to meet, had been suggested by Highways who had advised that it was unlikely the entire circuit could be reduced to 20 miles per hour. The Chairman noted the strength of feeling and said that the Parish Council would discuss the issue at its next meeting along with other measures that may improve road safety, such as trimming hedges obscuring the line of sight.

**6 Open Forum.** Parishioners raised their dissatisfaction about the poor management of road closures with frequently incorrect signage. Diversions and closures were poorly signposted leaving larger vehicles stuck in small lanes and causing longer routes to be followed unnecessarily when roads were open, despite signs to the contrary. Local residents and business owners were often inconvenienced and left feeling frustrated. Cllr Nicholson acknowledged that improvements should be made, this was discussed regularly at Parish, County and Exmoor Park National Authority (ENPA) meetings and will be a major topic of discussion at the next ENPA Panel meeting in June. [Two members of the public left the meeting.]

Parishioners noted that there had been an increase in dog fouling and requested that more signs were placed around the Parish.

The new signposting encouraging walkers to use the Snowdrop Valley footpaths was praised, however there were concerns about this heritage site - which promotes the area and boosts the local economy - deteriorating due to detritus and damage to the snowdrops. The Chairman noted that the path around the snowdrops was permissive, on land owned by Badgworthy Land Company. Whilst they allow the event to take place on their land, they do not contribute to maintenance costs preparing for the event.

A further issue of local concern is the replacement of the sports pavilion on the public recreation ground, which is a community amenity held by the Moorland Hall and Recreation Ground charity, benefitting local residents and sports clubs. Planning permission had been granted two years ago for the sports' club to replace the pavilion but there was little information in circulation about the plans for the site. Councillor Foxwell, as a trustee of the charity, would be interested in hearing parishioners' views regarding future plans and use of the recreation ground.

**7 Report on the Local Charities.** Cllr Webber gave a brief report on the George Joyce and the West charities both of which grant funds to parishioners in need including, in the case of the George Joyce charity, in Winsford and Wootten Courtney.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00 pm, thanking the Parishioners for attending and expressing their points of view.