

Minutes of the Ordinary Cutcombe Parish Council Meeting held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 15 March 2022 at the Moorland Hall

Present: Councillors Vivian White (*Chair*), John Anson, John Davis, Roger Foxwell, Eric Norman, Claire Rooke, Roger Webber, Steven Pugsley (District), J Clerk Jeanna Grenville. Five members of the public were present including participants of the Snowdrop Valley event

Public Question Time. No items were raised.

21/232 Apologies for absence. Apologies and reasons were accepted from Cllr Anson

21/233 Declarations of Interest. Cllr Norman for agenda item 15v and 19, Cllr Foxwell 15i.

21/234 Minutes of previous meeting and report on actions. The minutes of the previous meeting of 15 March were approved. **Actions:** Cllr Rooke will continue to pursue BT regarding renovations to the phone boxes, having received no response to date.

21/235 To receive the Chairman's Report. With the consent of Cllrs, the Chair rescheduled item 13 (Snowdrop Valley) on the agenda to follow item 6 (Reports from County and District Cllrs). Item 8 (toilet block extension) was postponed to a future meeting. The Chair proposed that agenda item 7 (War Memorial bench) be deferred in the absence of Cllr Anson, however Cllrs wished to return to this following reports from District and County Cllrs.

21/236 Reports from District and County Councillors. Cllr Foxwell agreed to send Cllr Nicholson a link to research by Exeter University considering the future procurement of food. Reporting back from the Exmoor Area Panel meeting last week, Cllr Pugsley confirmed the Parish Steward pilot would commence in quarter one 2021-22. The role will deal directly with low-scale maintenance. There is likely to be an intermediary role to liaise between Highways and the Steward on strategic issues. Additional funds of £20k have been allocated for the pilot, split equally between capital and revenue activities. Further consideration will be given to the Steward's role with respect to speed limits. Following storm Eunice, with attendant power outages, a number of parishes have been looking at emergency planning – including electricity generators - which Cutcombe may wish to consider. Cllrs noted owners' responsibilities to maintain their trees in a stable condition. Concerns were raised about the backlog of outstanding highway works, including Long Lane, which is now unsafe even for pedestrians, and the subsidence on the B3224. Inadequate or misleading signage for road works was raised with the suggestion that the unitary authority should seek improvements when Highways' contracts are relet.

21/237 Bench by War Memorial. In Cllr Anson's absence, the meeting was split as to whether this item should be postponed or discussed as scheduled. Cllr Webber pointed out that it was not certain the PC owned the plot which might prevent any further discussion. Cllr Foxwell requested a recorded vote and a motion was passed deferring the item, with voting as follows. Proposed and seconded: Cllr Davis and Cllr Norman respectively. For: Cllrs Davis, Norman and Rooke. Against: Cllrs Foxwell and Webber. Abstained; Cllr White. The Clerk is to obtain advice regarding the impact of the pre-election 'purdah' period on further discussions of this item.

21/238 Snowdrop Valley. Cllr Norman reported on the success of the Snowdrop Valley event this year, with approximately 6,000 visitors over 21 days of operation. Receipts of £3,351.50 for parking and merchandise had been banked. A representative noted that sum of £1,200 had been raised through the catering by the pre and First schools. [One member of the public left the meeting.] The success of the event has been due to the considerable efforts of the volunteers who assisted in maintaining the site and provided marshalling services on open days. Upon request, Cllr Norman apologised and withdrew suggestions that some members of the committee had not pulled their weight. He thanked the volunteers for their contributions, and offered thanks also to the caterers, Badgworthy land for their permission to operate the event, Exmoor Farmers for the use of their car park, Callie Edwards and Cynthia Stevens who helped promote the event, and for the assistance of ENPA

rangers. Cllr Norman was thanked for donating a photograph he had commissioned of Snowdrop Valley to be hung in the Edwin Beckett room.

21/239 Queen's Platinum Jubilee. A local committee is currently planning celebratory events and has requested financial support from the PC. Cllrs agreed that a sum of £300 would be made available, subject to receiving concrete proposals of how the money would be spent at its next meeting. The Clerk will confirm section 137 requirements. [A member of the public left the meeting.] Cllrs White and Webber had written to the National Trust voicing objections that they had opted not to have a beacon on Dunkery Beacon itself.

21/240 Elections 2022. The Clerk advised on the 5 May election timescales and submission requirements. Existing Cllrs remain in post until 9 May with new Cllrs sworn in at the meeting on 17 May. The Parish noticeboards and village Facebook will be used to promote the elections.

21/241 Highways and Transport. i) Local Community Network – as above, minute 21/236. ii) 20 mile per hour speed limit. With the Highways survey completed, and indicating that it might be possible to apply 20 mph limits around the complete loop, the Clerk was awaiting information about the potential costs for traffic calming. Further public consultation will take place once the costs are advised. Cllr Nicholson advised that there are no current opportunities for the County Council to contribute to the costs.

21/242 Planning. i) 6/ 8/21/105 Lower Cleeve updated application. Councillors resolved to object to the proposal on the basis that the access and location are unsuitable. ii) 6/8/22/104 Edbrooke Farm detached home office. Cllrs resolved to support the application. [Cllrs Nicholson Pugsley and a member of the public left the meeting.]

21/243 Recruitment of new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. It was agreed to promote the vacancy asap by advertising in the West Somerset Free News, SALC website and village Facebook page. The Clerk will offer training and support to her replacement, noting she will be away from 21 May for two weeks.

21/244 Finance. i) Grass cutting contract – Cllr Foxwell has obtained a quote for unit costss for maintenance from one supplier, and was continuing to seek further quotes. Cllrs agreed to reach a decision once provided with information regarding the whole costs of the contract. Meanwhile, local assistance may be available for temporary maintenance of the recreation area. ii) Renovations to the bus shelter – it was agreed to discuss this at a future date without press and public due to commercial sensitivities. [A member of the public left the meeting]. iii) Clerk's pay increase and Q4 payment – the motion, based on NJC national rates, was passed. iii) Banking update – the Clerk had written to the bank once again to complain as Cllr Webber had been informed that neither he nor Cllr White were signatories on the account. Balances at the bank stood at £52,703.28, broken down as: Current account £30,771.06, Reserve account £12,682.69, Snowdrop Valley £7,266.09.

21/245 Annual Governance and Accountability Review 2021-2. The Clerk confirmed the key dates for completion of the return. Councillors will need to confirm exemption from the limited assurance review as neither receipts or payments were likely to exceed £25,000.

21/246 Correspondence and Meetings. The Clerk had received an email from Mr R Simmons notifying the Council that he was standing down as the voluntary Footpath Liaison officer. Cllrs noted thanks for his efforts and agreed to promote the role to potential replacements.

21/247 Annual Parish Meeting and meeting of Electors – Confirmed as May 17 for Annual Parish Meeting and 19 May for annual meeting of Electors. Cllrs agreed that the Ordinary Parish Council meetings for 2022/3 should continue to be held in the large hall due to Covid risks. [Councillor Norman left the meeting.]

21/248 Public Toilet cleaning contract – the Clerk reported that she had been unable to complete the specification required to relet the contract due competing priorities. It was resolved that the existing contract would run on month by month until the reletting process has been completed.

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm.

Signed:

Dated:

Appendix - Payments and Receipts

Payments		
Moorland Hall £18	Rest and Be Thankful £240	Valda Energy £69.35
HMRC £30.60	Grenville £1,464.13	Water2Business £262.51
D Bowley £90	Badgworthy Land £50	Exmoor Farmers Market £50
Friends of Cutcombe School £1,500	SSE Electric £95.44 (historic payments)	
Receipts		
Tessera Business Unit £208.33	Bank interest 11p	