

BEERCROCOMBE PARISH

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Beercrocombe Parish held at Beercrocombe & Curry Mallet Village Hall on Monday 13th May 2024

ATTENDANCE

The Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, Five Parishioners, Clerk to the Parish Council, and Somerset Council Councillor.

The Vice Chairman of the Parish Council chaired the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9th May 2023 were received and approved.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Chairman of the Parish Council was unable to be present, but provided the following report which was read in his absence:

Mr. Plumbly gave the following report:

Firstly, my apologies for not attending the Annual Parish Meeting and thanks to Jayne for stepping in to provide the report.

This last year has been less eventful although there are ongoing financial challenges in the county and indeed in the country.

The Local Community Networks (LCNs) proposed by the new unitary authority meet every two months and our 'Moors & Levels' group have been well attended in person or online. The discussion groups are in three areas which are:

- Health and wellbeing which looks at mental health, loneliness, and physical health
- Highways
- Active travel focusing on footpaths/cycleways though mainly between Somerton and Bridgwater

We have discussed moving to the Ilminster and Crewkerne LCN with the A358 being an important shared focus over the last six years. This LCN is closer geographically to us and probably a more important centre of gravity

than Langport and Somerton. The discussion groups are broadly the same as in the Moors & Levels LCN.

Somerset Council's anticipated financial deficit is caused by numerous factors but the adult and child social care budget has increased this year by almost 18% and looks set to continue to rise. The deficit has led to outsourcing of community assets though Beercrocombe has none. We expect planned road maintenance and gully clearing to be more sporadic or postponed as the Council attempts to save money. The broader implication is that some Council services will decrease and, where possible, communities may need to volunteer to fill the void.

Frances & Martin Saunders very kindly offered to host a BBQ to mark the King's coronation – over 60 attended and had a great time. We have planned to do this again on 23rd June this year and hope this can be an annual event.

The annual plant sale at St James' in May produced £575 while the church spring clean was postponed till the autumn. The village enjoyed the concert given by our organist David Bigood and arranged by Lindsey Welfare in April in which raised over £350. Additional amounts were raised by the bus shelter.

garden produce (£43.25), notelets (£45) and the 100 club (£540) of net receipts which all go towards the church income.

The village green also looks good thanks to the mowing team who live around it and the barrels are maintained by Jayne Mann and others. Thanks to the Dibble family and to Niki and Simon Maggs for the donated Christmas trees in St James and on the green. Also, to Sally Gillichan who sorts the books in the phone box and keeps it tidy.

The Parish Council's financial situation is in good order and thanks go again to Paul Jervis for his audit of the accounts.

My thanks go to Gillian for her diligent planning, recording, advice to me and in navigating the unfamiliar paths of local government. I would also like to thank all my fellow councillors for their support and help during the year and for the volunteers who look after our village assets.

REPORTS FROM PARISH INTEREST GROUPS

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr Rastrick reported that the Parish had not suffered any instances of crime during the past year.

Neighbourhood Watch has 'updated and improved', all who register with the scheme will receive alerts directly from Avon & Somerset Police, rather than the scheme co-ordinator. To date, 14 of the current members have registered onto the new system, with a remaining 11 members still to do so.

Roads and Footpaths

Mr. Harvey delivered his report on roads and footpaths as follows:

Roads.

This last 12 months has been one of the wettest winters on records which has resulted in several flooding issues within the Parish. The main problem has been in Stocks Lane just below the junction at Elmbridge where there is a dip in the road resulting in water up to 4 feet forming which makes the road impossible to use for the majority of traffic and walkers. The matter has been reported to the Somerset Highways as two drains were blocked. Efforts had been made by Henry Cole, Peter Rust and James and John Down to clear the obstructions in the pipe down to the ditch. I notice however to-day 8th May that the water has now disappeared. I am not aware as to whether the drains and pipes have been cleared. After heavy rain to-day there is again flooding across the road.

There was flooding along Broadmead Road which has been resolved with the clearance of the whole ditch and culvert at the end close to Henry Cole's farm which again a big thanks goes to John and James Down. The railings in Broadmead have been replaced by Somerset Highways. The condition of the roads has deteriorated due to the excessive rainfall in the winter.

Footpaths.

The main concern is in respect of footpath L5/13 which runs alongside Mushroom Farm. During most of the winter this footpath has been impassable due to the footpath and the stream becoming one at the beginning of the footpath at Beer Street. The signpost and wooden bridge collapsed and I was able to have some temporary repairs carried out within 12 hours by a contractor instructed by the footpaths officer. It is hoped to review the whole length of the footpath with the footpath's officer shortly now it has become dry. The footpath signs for L5/13 and L5/14 are now back in place.

Village Hall Report

Thanks are owed to all of our thirteen Trustees for their support and contributions throughout the year – from help with gardening and exterior painting and organising and undertaking maintenance through to running two successful fundraising events. Not only do those help fund the running of the hall, they also give an opportunity to engage with our community to get them into the hall and enjoying a social event.

Our main goal, as reflected in our charitable objectives, is to provide facilities for the community users who book the hall – and to keep it in a good state of repair so that it meets their needs as well as our obligations under the Trust Deed – which is our main governance document.

We resolved the issue of the hall roof this year, through engaging a professional surveyor. They confirmed that, despite the need for ongoing

repairs to damage from weather as well as the occasional rock thrown onto the roof by persons unknown, the roof should last for a considerable time and did not need full replacement at this point. This confirmation has allowed us to take forward plans for improving the hall; starting with installation of IR heating which we hope will be completed over the summer. Fund raising to help pay for this project has been quite successful with thanks to Chris Dale for his considerable efforts. We now have sufficient to go ahead.

The next project will be to install PV panels and a battery to enhance the green credentials of the hall and, hopefully, reduce our energy costs. This will be more of a challenge for fundraising as we will need to secure the majority of the £20k required for the project from fundraising and applying for grants. The next item on the list is to resurface the car-park area with replenishing the gravel topping and making a significant repair to the concrete ramp.

Hall usage has decreased year on year, and we have concerns that running costs are higher than income although we have managed to continue with maintaining the hall decoration etc through a mix of professional services and sterling efforts of Trustees. We have repainted the main hall as well as the outside of the storeroom and external windows and doors. LED lights now replace the old fluorescent tubes in the main hall.

We had a cash deficit of £1834 in the year (last year was -£4732) and we continue to use reserves to balance this. The financial position is still sound, in that we have money in the bank and a reserves policy that ensures we keep sufficient back to enable the charity to be wound up properly if that should ever be required. We have continued to secure, from the new Somerset Unitary Authority, a 100% discount on our business rates – normally charities only automatically get 50% - but we will need to remember to apply for it each year as it no longer rolls over. Electricity prices remain volatile so costs of running the hall need to be kept under close scrutiny and we may need to make a small increase in rates mid-year to ensure we keep on track to our break-even goal.

The rent that the Parish Council negotiates with the Duchy was reviewed in year (Sept 23 being 5 years from when the current lease coming into force). The formula in the Lease agreement, based on RPI over the past 5 years up to 3 months before the review date, was applied which has increased our Rent by ~ 34%. We of course cannot recover this from our users.

During the year we received donations of £1726 and fund raising contributed an additional £880 all of which are essential to supporting the hall and we will continue fund raising events. There is also much to do to keep the hall as up to date decoratively as we can – and getting professional help with decorating and repairs remains a struggle - so we will be calling for volunteers to help us with some of the decoration and grounds work over the next few months.

Curry Mallet Parish Council have arranged the installation of significant additional play equipment which is being enjoyed by local children.

Village Trust

Mr. Harvey reported:

There was meeting of the trust on the 26th September 2023 and the 12th March 2024. One child received a grant for £200. An application was received from Beercrocombe PCC for grants of £75.00 for 2022/2023/2024 which were granted. Curry Mallet and Beercrocombe Village Hall were given a grant of £500 towards to cost of the proposed new heating at the village hall. Beercrocombe Parish Council were given a grant of £50 towards the maintenance of the telephone kiosk which is used as a library. The Parish Council also applied for a grant of £100 for the Annual BBQ which was refused as contravened the terms of the Trust.

Website

Mr Burrough gave the following report:

The parish website has been down for several months because the web hosting company Falcoda has stopped operating, without giving its clients notice and time to transfer to another company. Consequently, I am unable to edit the website. The web is a complex arena with many foreign companies sharing operations through automated systems, and none has been prepared to sort out the mess left by a rogue company like Falcoda.

However, the lease on the URL beercrocombe.org expires at the end of this month at which point it should be returned to the open market. If so, I will reacquire it through a new web hosting company. The alternative is to buy a new URL. As the parish website is primarily there to cover our legal obligations the impact of not being up to date has not been significant. Although this period has been frustrating the parish has had a web site for 9 years at a cost of just under £10 per annum. I will get the site up and running again, but I intend giving up the web master role next year.

For the past year the Beer and Curry Newsletter has been posted on the website.

Beer and Curry Takeaway

Mr Burrough reported that Phil and Jane Talbot put a lot of effort into producing the quarterly editions of the Beer and Curry. It is a pity that there are very few contributions to the Newsletter from the Beercrocombe community.

QUESTIONS FROM PARISHIONERS

There were no matters raised.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm.