

Minutes of the meeting held 04/04/24, 19:00 Witheridge Parish Hall**PRESENT:**

Cllr Harvey – Chairman
Cllr Northam

Cllr Cunningham
Cllr Fox

Cllr Richardson
Cllr Smith

In Attendance:

District Cllr Jones
County Cllr Yabsley

6 Member of Public

Mr P Dunn - Clerk

1. Chairman's Welcome.

The Chairman welcomed those present.

2. To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies noted from Cllrs Bibby, Dorow and Goodwin.

3. Minutes. To sign, if approved, the minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting.

RESOLVED: Cllr Richardson proposed, Cllr Northam seconded and all were in favour approval minutes 06/04/23.

4. District & County Cllr Reports.

Cllr Yabsley reported:-

- Surface dressing of highways was underway.
- Road closures signage ambiguity issues.
- Closure of Health Link Centre in North Devon.
- Devolution Deal consultation closed.
- Zebra crossing lighting now fully functioning.

Cllr Jones reported:-

- Cannington Road Open Space – any planning application on the land would be unlikely to be passed. Any breach of the Deed of Covenant governing the space will be enforced by the District Council.
- Allison Homes / Legal & General Meeting took place last Wednesday.
- Mr Cattermole representing Allison Homes will attend the parish council public session monthly.
- Allison Home will erect a notice board to keep local residents informed of development matters.
- Section 106 monies from the latest development are expected imminently.
- There will be a community presentation on the allocation of the Affordable Homes.

Thanks were expressed to Cllr Jones for chairing the meeting.

5. Parish Council Chairman's Report.

A written report from the Chairman was read, see report appended.

6. Local Group & Charity Reports.**Witheridge Parish Hall Committee**

The Committee will be writing to the Charity Commission concerning the lease of the parish hall playground land to the parish council.

7. Open Questions.

The date of the next Litter Pick was requested and whether the council's insurance would cover children participating. **Clerk to check with insurers.**

Meeting closed 20:00.

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Parish Council Chairman's Annual report 2023/2024

2023 was an election year and the May meeting began with just five councillors who expressed an interest to remain, those being myself Councillor Jacky Harvey, Councillor Carol Northam, Councillor Gary Dorow, Councillor Steven Smith, and Councillor Clive Richardson leaving five vacancies. However I am delighted to add that we are now up to full strength, by the co option of Councillor Claire Goodwin, Councillor John Bibby, Councillor Woody Fox, Councillor Russell North, and Councillor Matthew Cunningham. We also have a newly elected District Councillor Mr Peter Jones who has a positive outlook and has proved a large asset to our year. Mr. Jeremy Yabsley remains as our county Councillor. Welcome to you all.

This year has without doubt been an extremely busy year once again for the council necessitating that our interregnum month of August became a working one. I will pick out the salient points from the year.

The planning application for 155 houses west of Willow Rise continues to haunt us, as the original application was for 30% of the houses to be affordable and the remainder to be for sale on the open market, however Alison Homes have requested to planning that the whole scheme of 155 homes become affordable .Due to the economic climate at present the contractor Alison Homes are in discussion with Legal and General insurance company to work in partnership. L&G will take on the management of the new housing. Because the format of the application has not changed there is no opening for a planning appeal. Councillor Jones arranged and chaired an open meeting with Alison Homes on the 13th March 2024 to discuss the changes. It was well attended by the public and Parish councillors. We discovered that 35 homes will be at subsidised rent, 42 at affordable rent and 78 properties for shared ownership. They will be advertised on Devon Home choice with local connection housed first then a cascade system extending to the whole of North Devon. It was stated by planning that no rents would exceed the local housing allowance and there were 23 families registered in Witheridge and the local area with Devon Care, in need of housing. As the Northern Open Space from the long completed first phase has not yet come into the possession of the Parish Council the subject was aired. The contractors stated that the land would be retained to store

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materials and machinery for the improvements to the footpath on Fore Street. They have promised that both the land and the existing sales area will be levelled and restored to grassland. Their estimate of time was July 2024. One positive outcome of the of the proposed planning changes will be the 106 money promised for the enhancement of local facilities, will not change and it will be available within three months instead of the existing conditions that it be given in annual stages over the construction period of five years.

Late Summer 2023 saw the long awaited opening of our new play facilities at the Adventure Playground, much later than planned. The parish council employed an independent playground inspector before they took ownership, who indentified a few problems the main one being the excessive height of the platform on the tot's multi play equipment. This necessitated the purchase of a higher barrier so as to comply with BS 1176 as per the tender specification. Once open however it was well received by both Children and parents alike.

The annual Withyfest Festival raised concerns as to the impact on local families. 17 residents attended our August meeting to relay their complaints including excessive noise from the newly added "dub tent", the event closing times being ignored, inconsiderate parking, and anti social behaviour. Councillor Peter Jones subsequently held a meeting with the concerned residents and Withyfest representatives and it was agreed that future events would be scaled back to the size of the event held three years previously.

Using allocated 106 monies the County Highways installed the new zebra crossing for children attending the academy primary school. The crossing lighting however is not working correctly. Councillor Yabsley has managed to get highways to investigate the failure and it seems that the electrical conduit is blocked and until said conduit can be unblocked our crossing is still impersonating "Cyclops".

A big plus for highways in August was the re instating of a collapsed drain at the entrance to Butts Close alleviating the continual flooding of the road and numerous pot holes caused by the water, just in time for this Winters deluge.

There has never been a formal agreement between the Parish Hall Committee and the Parish Council as to the responsibilities of the land occupied by the tots

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playground .As the parish council has precept powers to raise adequate funding annually to maintain and improve the facility it is seeking a lease at a peppercorn rent, given all costs (past and present) associated with the playground maintenance and periodic refurbishments .The leisure facility supports the aims of the parish hall trusts charitable objectives. At the council March meeting it was agreed to accept a quotation from Bennock fencing to install bow topped railings around the perimeter of the playground with disabled access thereby keeping our children safe. This was made possible from 106 money however the installation is subject to the Parish Hall Committee seeking legal advice on a commercial rent, and the Parish council's approval of such.

Witheridge Parish Church of St. John the Baptist and its clock became the subject of media frenzy in March .I personally only took recorded messages after receiving calls from several newspapers and television news. The clock had been silenced by an abatement notice received from the District Council environmental office in December giving us fourteen days to comply or receive an ongoing fine. There had been a complaint from a resident about the quarter hour chimes through the night and it was upheld, therefore the Parish Council had no option but to silence the clock until quotations could be obtained to enable the clock to chime during the day but cease from eleven PM to seven AM. The quotations from Cumbria Clocks were received and approved by the Parish Council and the clock began chiming again in March. As the original complaint was the quarter hour chimes the Parish Council has sort clarification from the environmental office that could the clock sound the hour chimes only throughout the night? We are still awaiting their decision.

Jacky Harvey Chairman