

**HOLCOMBE ROGUS PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of**

**Annual Meeting**

**Held in the King George V Memorial Hall on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**APPROVED**

- 5.1 All Councillors signed the Acceptance of Office Form which were witnessed by the Parish Clerk. The Councillor information form & privacy notice were also signed.
- 5.2 The current Chairman Councillor Adam Pilgrim opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting before standing down. A warm welcome to the newest member Councillor Frances Freeman.

- 5.3 **Present:**  
Councillors: Adam Pilgrim (Chairman), Nikki Orchard, Rupert Snook, Sally Barker, Frances Freeman and Jane Lock  
District Councillor Jane Lock  
Parish Clerk Leslie Findlay  
Gordon Czapiewski (Public Rights of Way Representative)

- 5.4 **Apologies:** District Councillor Gill Westcott & County Councillor Ray Radford (report attached)

- 5.5 **Election of Officers:**

- 5.5.1 Cllr N Orchard proposed Cllr Pilgrim to be the new Chairman, seconded by Cllr Barker and unanimously approved by all Councillors. The new Chairman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form witnessed by the Proper Officer.
- 5.5.2 It was proposed (AP) and seconded (RS), with a unanimous vote that Councillor Nikki Orchard be elected as the new Vice – Chair.

- 5.5.2 **Election of Appointments and Committees**

The following appointments and Committees were unanimously approved by all Councillors:

Appointment	Nomination	Proposed	Seconded
Chair of Planning	Cllr Pilgrim	SB	FF
Deputy Chair of Planning	Cllr Orchard		
Planning Committee	All Councillors		
Highways	Cllr Snook	NO	SB
Canal Representative	Cllr Pilgrim	NO	RS
Environment	Cllr Freeman	NO	SB
Media Representative	Cllr Barker	RS	JL
Quarry Liaison Representative	Cllr Snook	SB	FF
Public Rights of Way	Cllr Freeman	NO	AP
Ayshford Trust Representatives	Cllrs Barker and Cllr Snook		

Snow Warden/ Flood Warden – Mr Andy Cooling and Mr Dave Authers have kindly been assisting the Council with these two appointments.

- 5.6 **Declaration of Interests:** Cllr Orchard declared a personal interest in item 5.12.2.2

## OPEN FORUM

No matters were raised

### 5.7 Minutes of Previous Meetings and Matters arising

The Minutes were signed by AP as a true and correct record and unanimously approved by all Councillors.

**5.7.1** Village Signposts: There has been no further development on the replacement of the village signpost.

**5.7.2** Defibrillator: The Village Hall Trust have agreed to take on the responsibility of the defibrillator with the PC paying for the maintenance costs. Cllr Orchard will brief Mr Jeremy Hillman on the various checks that need to be carried out.

**NO**

**5.7.3** First Aid training was agreed that there should be some further first aid training, especially for the defibrillator. Cllr Barker will put an article in the Parish News to see if there is any interest from the residents.

**SB**

### 5.8 Environment

**5.8.1** Grand Western Canal: The serious flooding at Lowdwells is being investigated by the Canal Ranger and the road is currently closed. There has been no progress on the Pondground application about leakage into the canal.

**5.8.2** Public Rights of Way: Cllr Freeman and Mr Czapiewski had a very informative meeting with the P3 Coordinator from DCC and will be conducting the checks on the footpaths. Footpath 15 has now got a gate installed by Fenacre Farm to avoid the tall stile.

### 5.9 Highways

**5.9.1** Work carried out: There have been several repairs of potholes throughout the Parish, including Wiseburrow, kennels bridge and Black Lane.

**5.9.2** Repairs to be reported: The Street light near Whitebrook Terrace has not been repaired, Clerk has reported it again (Fault 53215).

### 5.10 The Mary Fewings Playpark

There have been several suggestions for spending the remaining money in the playarea reserve fund. Councillors agreed that the suggestion of a basketball hoop or something similar should be investigated further for cost. Clerk and Councillors to report back at next meeting.

**ALL**

### 5.11 Planning

There were no new applications or MDDC decisions since the last meeting.

### 5.12 Finance/ Clerk Report

#### 5.12.1 Income received:

April interest £28.50

**5.12.2** Expenditure already approved or agreed outside of Committee:

**5.12.2.1** MG Groundcare - £123 for strimming and weed spraying.

**5.12.2.2** Defibrillator batteries £78 paid to Cllr Orchard

**5.12.3** It was resolved that the following expenditure was approved for payment by the RFO:

	Amount £	DD/BACS/SO	Payable to	Comments
<b>5.12.3.1</b>	40.00	BACS	L Findlay	Printer cartridges
<b>5.12.3.2</b>	549.98	BACS	Community First	Annual insurance
<b>5.12.3.3</b>	144.00	BACS	DALC	Planning course for 4 Cllrs
<b>5.12.3.4</b>	170.00	BACS	VisionICT	To set up data backup

**5.12.4**

The request from the Village Hall Trust for assistance with purchasing new chairs was refused. The Solar Fund is currently funding two projects and Councillors did not feel this was good use of the money when the Hall had more pressing issues to address.

**5.12.5**

The bank statements and bank reconciliation for April were checked and signed by the Chairman.

**5.13**

**Matters brought forward for information or future agenda.**

**5.13.1**

There are currently three vacancies on the Council. Cllr Barker will advertise the posts in the Parish News.

**5.13.2**

Cllr Barker raised the state of the telephone box which needs restoration. As the box must be painted to the standards set down by BT with specific paint etc, Cllr Snook will investigate and report back to Cllrs at the next meeting.

**RS**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.02pm The June Meeting will be held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June at 7pm.

Adam Pilgrim  
Chairman  
Holcombe Rogus Parish Council

**County Councillor Report**

Another Council year has just gone, how quick it goes. Things are hectic at County, it has been a challenging year, more so than any previous years, finances are very tight, there are services we have to supply, irrespective of the cost and the government do not allow enough for those services.

As a County Councillor you have to serve on various committees, for me I am on the Corporate Services and Infrastructure some of whose main responsibilities are roads, waste, planning, properties, etc. There are other committees I serve on such as Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) and the Canal Advisory Committee.

The sort of financial pressures includes Adult Services and Children and Young People, both of these suck up 79% of available revenue, this is mandatory, we have to do it. Because of the cost of these services, other departments revenues are squeezed.

The Council finds itself in a very challenging internal position in that Children's Services, SEND provision and budget sustainability face serious challenge along with concern from stakeholders regarding confidence in the Council to address these challenges. The continuous failure of the Council to improve the inadequate judgement by Ofsted of Children's Services over a 12-year period has resulted in the children's minister issuing a Revised Statutory Direction for social care specifically citing failures of corporate governance and escalating to the appointment of a commissioner to oversee Improvement and hold the Council to account. There is also government intervention for SEND and a material threat of a s114 notice because of the High Needs Block deficit now approaching £130 M.

These are serious, failures of the County Council's governance in response the Leader and Chief Executive in meetings with the children's minister have agreed the urgent need for a Review of Corporate Governance as a priority in conjunction with the formal work of the Improvement Boards in Children's Services where oversight of progress is led by the Commissioner appointed by the Minister and the SEND Improvement Board.

The services the Council provide, and the context of delivery have significantly changed; equally so our staff are impacted by these contexts too. In summary the Council finds itself in a very different operating context and the need for a review of priorities is required. In additionality the Council finds itself in a very challenging internal position in that Children's Services, SEND provision and budget sustainability face serious challenge in the Council to address these challenges.

The continuous failure of the Council to be able to improve the Inadequate judgement by Ofsted of Children's Services, has resulted in the children's minister issuing a Revised Statutory Direction for social care specifically corporate governance and escalating to the appointment of a Commissioner to oversee Improvement and hold the Council to account. There is also government intervention for SEND and a material threat of a s114 notice because of the High Needs Block deficit now approaching £130m.

In response the Leader and Chief Executive in meetings with the children's minister have agreed the urgent need for a Review of Corporate Governance as a priority in conjunction with the formal work of the Improvement Boards in Children's Services where oversight of progress is led by the Commissioner appointed by the Minister and the SEND Improvement Board.

The Adult Social Services Budget is £336m per year and the Children and Young People Budget is £233m per year, these are all mandatory, we have to supply the service. This represents almost 80% of our total revenue/income.

Highways for maintenance of Devon roads had gradually fallen from around £35 million in 2012/13 to approximately £25 million in 2022/23. Coupled with inflationary change, in particular the rapid increase in inflation seen in 2022/23, this meant that the maintenance budget had halved in real terms compared to a decade ago. This also has the knock-on impact of forcing change in priorities with safety taking higher consideration and proactive works being stopped, leading to rapid deterioration of roads. Having said that, the Government have advanced DCC with an extra £9.4m for this coming year, this will help.

It is worth noting that 80% of traffic use 20% of the 8,000miles of Devon's` highway.

A well-defined asset management approach enables the County Council to demonstrate it has a clear methodology for valuing highway infrastructure assets and determining their condition. The Plan will be a key document used by the officers, consultants, and contractors enabling the effective management and maintenance of the highway asset. It will provide Elected Members with the background to help decision making, and it is available to members of the public so that they can understand the challenges faced by the Service in managing the highway asset and the reasons for the actions being taken. It is unavoidable that deteriorating condition will lead to an increase in revenue funded reactive repairs and increased future planned maintenance costs. In the long term there will also be an impact on the selection of journey routes and the reliability of journey times.

Regards,

Ray  
Ray Radford  
Devon County Councillor  
Willand & Uffculme Division  
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