

COMBE FLOREY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

WEDNESDAY 3 May 2017 at 7.00pm, Combe Florey Village Hall

Minutes

(in the format to be submitted to the next meeting for approval as a correct record)

Present:

Cllr Peter Watson, Cllr Jane Warmington, Cllr Peter Taylor, Cllr L Boulton

C Morrison-Jones (clerk)

Nineteen members of the public

1) Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman of the Parish Council welcomed the large number of parishioners and thanked them all for attending

2) To receive any apologies of absence

Apologies sent by G Marshall

3) Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2016

Following representations from those present, the presented minutes were adjusted in regard to the reference to the area in front of the village land with the addition of the following “ownership has yet to be clarified – ongoing discussion between the Village Hall and Somerset County Council.”

With this addition, the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman of the Parish Council

4) Matters arising from the minutes

Farmers Arms / A 358 junction: Following a request for an update by a parishioner present, the Chairman confirmed that County Cllr M Rigby had agreed to apply for a grant to cover the cost of re-signing of the junction once the Small Highways Improvement Scheme re-opens for the 2017/18 financial year

5) Report by the Chairman of Combe Florey Parish Council

As the Chairman had only just taken up the role, she invited longer standing Members of the Parish Council to report on notable Parish Council activities over the past year:

- i) A clerk has now been appointed, which will free up Members from administrative duties and enable them to be more active in the village
- ii) Purchase and installation of a sign for the Village Garden
- iii) Village tidiness – a lengthsman is now engaged by the Parish Council
- iv) Farmers Arms junction – the Parish Council has secured the support of County Cllr M Rigby for a new, interactive sign for the junction
- v) Parish web-site is now up and running. A useful source of information regarding the parish and surrounding areas.

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Signed and DatedParish Council Chairman

6) Merits of a Parish Council vs a Parish Meeting

As a result of a topic brought up at the last Parish Council meeting, Steve Jones, chairman of the Ash Priors Village Meeting, was contacted and, as unable to attend the meeting, had produced a report outlining how Ash Priors Parish Meeting functions (report attached at end of these minutes).

The report generated discussion from the members of the public regarding the merits of the Parish Council versus a Parish Meeting. Some present felt that a Parish Meeting would serve the needs of Combe Florey adequately, whereas many advocated the retention of a Parish Council.

Parish Meeting: some highlighted pros and cons

- Lower cost – minimal / no administrative costs if no work undertaken
- Gives the village a collective, community voice
- No precept need to be raised if no work to be undertaken for the village
- Audit costs still applicable if any financial transactions under taken
- Insurance cover would have to be in place to cover village assets and associated public liability
- More flexibility than a Parish Council
- Dependant on one person

Parish Council: some highlighted pros and cons

- High degree of accountability to the community it serves
- Formal structure of a Parish Council helps maintain order
- As statutory consultee, District and County Councils value its opinions
- For 2017/18, the precept for a band D property is only 63 pence per week which represents great value for money for parishioners
- Parish Councils serve small communities well
- Clerk carrying out administrative role frees councillors to focus on the needs of the community
- Historically Combe Florey has been without a Parish Council and the parish was pleased when the population increased enough to have a Parish Council
- A clerk is essential for a Parish Council to ensure it runs correctly and efficiently
- Has access to certain funding sources that are closed to other groups
- Can claim back VAT spent on purchases

It was agreed that this topic was reviewed at the Parish Meeting next year, with Parish Councillors using their time, that is now freed up by the clerk taking on the administrative role, gaining village opinions.

7) Establish parishioners' priorities for the upcoming year.

- i) Continue to press for action on the resigning of the Farmers Arms / A358 junction
- ii) New stile at footpath, Nethercott Lane-railway line
- iii) Dog gates integrated at stiles on footpaths to allow longer, interconnected walks

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- iv) Encourage the picking up of dog waste
- v) Investigate the possibility of a suggestions page on the website

8) Any other business

Questions were raised about the locations that the strimmers used / loaned by the Parish Council were being used. The chairman pointed out that it was to the benefit of the community if the village was kept tidy and that community spirit should prevail. Volunteers should be applauded as they saved communities from having to employ contractors

The chairman thanked those present for attending and sharing their views and ideas.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.25pm

Report from Steve Jones, Chair of Ash Priors Parish Meeting

Ash Priors Parish Meeting:

I was elected chairman in 2003. There are no other officers, just the Chairman. The post is unpaid.

I was fortunate to have an assiduous volunteer Minutes Secretary, Barbara Cullimore, right up to her untimely death in 2016. I also previously had the benefit of a very useful connection to TDBC Parish Liaison Officer, David Greig – but his post was abolished in 2013 as a consequence of a budget review.

Meetings:

I am not required to hold regular meetings and in our case the trigger for a meeting is usually a planning application within the Parish (for uncontentious, minor applications I may take chairman's action in approving them). But I am required to hold an election annually for the post of chairman at a meeting between 1 March and 1 June, inclusive. I may call a meeting with 9 days notice (not before 6pm) and these are held in the Village Hall, for which, by the agreement of the Village Hall Committee, there is no charge.

There is no rule that provides for a quorum for a Parish Meeting. Members are all those who are registered electors in the Parish and we have an average attendance of over 20 members. I would consider six or more to be a minimum.

These rules stem from the Local Government Act, 1972, described in a useful Guide by John Prophet

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Finance:

I receive a request each year from TDBC for the level of precept the Meeting wishes to receive. For the last few years, in the absence of any expenditure, we have not raised a precept. This simplifies the response to the official auditors, as without income or expenditure, no audit is required.

Communication:

Now that the majority of residents can receive email, the process of notification of meetings, distribution of agendas and minutes is much simplified. In addition, the ability to circulate urgent information has proved beneficial, as in the recent case of a spate of burglaries in the village over the 2017 Easter weekend.

APPM coordinated the resurrection of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the parish last year and we have an official NHW Co-ordinator, Alan Scott-Davies. All our meetings are attended by our local PCSO, Louise Fyne (or PC Jo Jeffery in her absence) who gives a crime report for the period since the last meeting.

In my view, a Parish Meeting serves us well, without the need to have a formal Parish Council and at minimal expense. There is, of course, a regular turnover of residents in the village and that view may be challenged in future, but at present I believe local residents are content with the current situation.

Steve Jones

Chairman, Ash Priors Parish Meeting – 20 April 2017

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