

# Combe Florey Parish Council

<b>Date of Meeting:</b> Tuesday 09th May 2023 7:00 pm At Combe Florey Village Hall	<b>Written by:</b> Gemma Coombes (Parish Clerk)
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## Annual Parish Meeting Minutes

### Councillor's Present

Cllr Robin Cleverly (Chair)  
 Cllr Simon Hawes (RFO)  
 Cllr Jacquy Newton  
 Cllr Adriana Truby

### In attendance

Parishioners x 6

### 2023/1) Welcome by Chairman - Robin Cleverly

The chairman Cllr Robin Cleverly welcomed the parishioners in attendance. He introduced the councillors: Simon Hawes (responsible financial officer), Jacquy Newton who joined the council in the last year, Jana Truby who has recently rejoined the council, and (absent) John Passingham who has sent his apologies for this meeting. Cllr Cleverly also mentioned former councillors Chris Steel and Nick Weeks who resigned during the year.

### 2023/2) Apologies for absence

Cllr John Passingham sent his apologies.  
 Louise Fyne the PCSO has sent her apologies as she is off work this week.  
 No formal apologies from Somerset Council Councillors.  
 Other apologies from Cindy Bottard, Phil Greenway and Chris Steel.

### 2023/3) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes from the 10th May 2022 were taken as read. It was proposed to adopt the minutes by Cllr Cleverly and seconded by Cllr Hawes, All in favour of adopting the minutes. Signed by Chairman.

### 2023/4) Chairman's Report

The past year has been mainly business as usual. We have received 15 planning applications over the year– which were all supported by the Parish Council. Apart from minor works, the more major applications were for replacement of the house at Chesil House, conversion of barns into five new houses at Greenacres Farm – which are still pending, and a new building behind Rectory Cottages that was refused.

Work on the village garden has been proceeding. We commissioned a garden design last year and most of the design work has now been completed with metal edging around the grass areas, and the laying of permeable membrane and bark mulch. The 100 hedge plants put in last year have mostly survived the drought last year and are growing well. We have recently purchased a new bench, and planted a specimen wedding cake tree (*Cornus controversa* 'Variegata') which was intended to be for the jubilee but could also be for the coronation. This year we plan to add more low-maintenance plants. A structural survey was carried out on the wall on the west of the garden which concluded that it was generally structurally sound, though there still remain questions over its ownership. We were pleased to welcome back an enthusiastic group of Squirrels (junior scouts) who also used water from the pump when planting pansies and primroses as part of their community service and gardening badges.

We are still working to make a slight change to the footpath that leads to Ash Priors to avoid the dogleg across the B3224. The necessary agreements are mostly in place so I hope that will be done in the next year.

Cllr Cleverly concluded his report with thanks to members of the parish council and the clerk for their work during the year.

Minutes from Combe Florey Annual Parish Meeting May 09th 2023

Signed: ..... [Chairman]

**2023/5) Financial Report**

Cllr Hawes opened his report saying he wished to cover three topics:

State of the Parish Council Finances.

The Parish Council is in good financial health.

CFPC is a small council. Its primary source of income is the Annual Precept, raised through Council Tax, amounting to £4,000 per year (and which has not been increased for the last decade).

Approximately £1,000 per year is spent on the Parish Clerk's wages and expenses. The remaining principal areas of recurring expense comprise the Website, Insurance, Village Hall hire for PC meetings, the Parish Lengthsman (who trims the verges and lanes within the village) and the burial grants paid to CFPC and passed onwards to the Parochial Church Council..

Thereafter, CFPC undertakes various projects which are more one-off in nature but can span financial years. Examples within the year includes the Jubilee party (funded by ticket sales but which CFPC underwrote), the continuing restoration of the Village Garden, survey on the wall in village garden and painting signposts within the village.

At the end of the year, CFPC balances held at the bank were £6,669 but after taking into account uncleared cheques, reconciled to £5,757 balances reflected in CFPC's accounts.

Total income in the year was £4,450 and total expenditure was £5,362. Accordingly, there was a deficiency of £912 which reduced CFPC's cash reserves.

The closing cash balance represents a little over one year's worth of precept, providing a prudent but not excessive buffer against unforeseen expenditure.

As we are deemed a small council (revenues less than £25,000 per annum), we do not need an External Audit. However, an internal audit is undertaken by an independent person (historically Sue Greenway – who provides this service pro-bono and for which CFPC are most grateful).

The accounts are prepared by myself as the Responsible Financial Officer, reviewed by the Internal Auditor, and then approved and adopted by CFPC.

The accounts, together with an Annual Governance and Accountability Return, are then published on the CFPC website by 1 July 2023.

With regard to the Annual Precept, your Council takes considerable pride in the fact that the precept has not been increased for many years. However, in inflationary times, this may need to be reviewed.

CIL

Community infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a tax, raised by Somerset Council (previously Somerset West and Taunton) on new residential developments and extensions undertaken within the Parish. CFPC receives 15% of the amount charged. CIL funds can be applied to a broad range of expenditure, defined as the "Provision, replacement, operation, improvement or maintenance of infrastructure" within the Parish.

Historically, CFPC has opted out of CIL. This decision, taken many years ago, was probably because the probability of CIL arising from new build developments was thought to be remote, given the planning restrictions on new build and extensions within the Parish, much of which sits within a Conservation Area.

CFPC were contacted by Somerset Council late last year and informed us that they currently hold £5,082 of CIL funds. These could be made available were CFPC to opt back into the CIL scheme. Accordingly, Somerset Council have agreed to release the CIL funding to CFPC. The funding is paid out twice a year (in April and October). Rebecca was hopeful that CFPC would receive the funds in April; in the event, teething problems with the new Somerset Council finance system means the funds have yet to arrive.

The receipt of CIL funding is conditional on CFPC formally opting back into the CIL scheme. This will be put to the Annual Parish Council meeting on 23 May 2023. Thereafter, CFPC will be required to complete annual CIL declarations and returns.

Defibrillator Project and associated VAT issues

The Combe Florey Defibrillator Group ("CFDG") has been formed with a view to raising funding for the rental of 2 Defibrillators within the Parish. CFDG initially approached CFPC requesting funding in the amount of £2,050. The proposal was that 2 Defibrillators be sourced from the South

**Minutes from Combe Florey Annual Parish Meeting May 09th 2023**

**Signed:** ..... [Chairman]

**DRAFT MINUTES**

West Ambulance Trust ("SWAT") under a four year rental agreement (including maintenance costs but not installation) at a total aggregate cost of £2,800 plus VAT (£560), bringing the total cost to £3,360.

As had been recorded in previous minutes, CFPC is supportive of this initiative, but had some questions, including, inter alia, the total project costing and a firmer estimate of the total grants being solicited from other sources.

One issue raised at the time was whether it would be possible for CFPC itself to enter into the rental agreements, as CFPC would then be able to reclaim the VAT. It was then suggested that CFPC could make the Defibrillators available to CFDG as the lower cost of £2,800.

This request raises complex issues within VAT legislation which Cllr Hawes (in his capacity as RFO) has been researching.

Initial findings are as follows:

If CFPC were to receive funds from CFDG (deemed a community voluntary group for VAT purposes), then it would not be able to reclaim the VAT (see VATGPB8375). It is noted that this is not being proposed by CFDG. CFDG itself is not registered for VAT purposes and is unable to recover the VAT.

Another point raised by VATGPB8375 is that if CFPC enters into the rental agreement itself, thereby retaining economic rights and responsibilities under the rental agreement but receives no financial payment from CFDG, it would appear that CFPC, as a S32 Registered entity, could reclaim the VAT.

However, a slightly esoteric question then arises under the VAT legislation. This is the question as to whether CFPC has received a non-financial benefit from CFDG in return for providing the use of the Defibrillator. The risk being that in if this were the case, then that this constitutes a taxable supply on which VAT should be raised.

Further detailed research is required on this point; one option is that CFPC obtain independent expert advice, but it was noted that the likely cost of the advice would outweigh any potential VAT saving.

Cllr Hawes undertook to complete his research, including a possible discussion with HMRC and revert at the next council meeting.

**2023/6) Somerset Council report (Cllr Mike Rigby / Cllr Andy Sully)**

None given.

**2023/7) Report from local groups**

**1. Parochial Church Council**

Irene Cleverly summarised the annual report on behalf of the PCC.

**2. Village hall**

Update on the Village Hall was given by the Parish Council representative Cllr Jacquey Newton.

**2023/8) Defibrillator group presentation**

See Financial Report above.

The group will be giving an update to the Parish Council at the next meeting on the 23rd of May.

**2023/9) Creating a Parish Emergency Plan**

Somerset Prepared needed an emergency plan in order to get the grant for the defibrillator. This was developed by Cllr Truby and the defibrillator group.

We are now looking to produce a two page summary with instructions for emergencies, and names of key contacts, including trained first aiders.

This will be on the notice board and the Parish Council website. Any numbers and names on the plan have happily given their permission to put their details in the plan.

**2023/10) Public Forum, discussion and general questions:**

**Establish parishioners' priorities for forthcoming year.**

Cllr Cleverly opened the floor to the public.

*Dog waste*

Cllr Cleverly read out an email from a Parishioner who could not attend the meeting in person, about the problems with dog waste around the parish. The main issues are: whether a bin is needed, possible sites on council or non-privately owned land, costs and logistics for emptying. Cllr Hawes suggested asking the Village Hall specifically about a dog waste bin.

**Minutes from Combe Florey Annual Parish Meeting May 09th 2023**

**Signed: ..... [Chairman]**

*General litter along the A-road*

A Parishioner raised the issue that there is an increased amount of litter, including car parts, on verges around the Parish. As access to the sides of the A-road is difficult and dangerous these issues need to be reported to the Council via its website.

*Village garden*

The PC thanks Cllr John Passingham for all his effort with the Village Garden.

The next stages are to organise more planting and to ask Thomasina to help with this. Mark Lewis does not have the spare capacity to take on a regular work in the garden but is happy with someone else taking this on.

Cllr Truby will ask her gardener if she would be prepared to take this on.

The garden is being used, including by visitors.

**Meeting closed:** at 20:37

- 2023/11) Next Parish Council Meeting:**  
Date: Tuesday 23rd May 2023 at 7pm  
Location: Combe Florey Village Hall
- Next Annual Parish Meeting:**  
Date to be set next year.