

**OTTERHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

held on

**THURSDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2021, 7.00pm at Otterhampton Village Hall**

**DECLARATION(S) OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS:**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations applied for. Member's Interests are disclosed at the time of taking Office. This information can be viewed on the Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) website.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

- Following the return of the Hinkley Point C buses collecting passengers from the bus shelter, fly parking has returned. Somerset Passenger Solutions will be requested to take action, copy to Andy Cockcroft. **Action: Clerk**
- The Combwich and District WI have had an oak tree donated to them to be planted in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022 together with a plaque. In principle, the parish council is supportive of this request but will need to get some advice on the most suitable location to plant an oak tree.
- The memorial tree planted on the piece of land near the WWT entrance on Combwich track has died but will be replaced in late autumn.
- Adults have been noticed on items of play equipment at the play area. This will be highlighted in Otter Tales, reminding people of the age restriction of 12 years and under for users of the play equipment. **Action: Clerk**

**Ward Councillor Reports**

Both ward councillors submitted their apologies for absence. Cllr Caswell emailed the blue briefing paper to councillors in advance of the meeting. Cllr Pay advised in advance that she had nothing to report.

**PRESENT:**

Julie Evans (Chair), Bob Birkenhead (Vice-Chair), Marie Beckley, Lindsey Parsons, Aly Prowse (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

**100/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

- a. Apologies for absence were received from Andy Darch, Tina Gardener and Rachel Perrett.
- b. The Chair explained that as she is still undergoing chemotherapy treatment, if she continued to attend meetings in person it may be a risk to her immune system and hence the risk of infection. This means she is likely to miss a number of forthcoming meetings and wanted to know if this would be acceptable to councillors. This was AGREED by those present. We all send Julie our very best wishes as she continues with her treatment.

**101/21 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 1.7.21:**

The minutes of the meeting held at Otterhampton Primary School on 1.7.21 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

**102/21 PLANNING MATTERS:**

1. **39/20/00012** – Roof and change of use from silage clamp to silage clamp and livestock building. Lower Hill Farm, Otterhampton. PERMISSION GRANTED.
2. **39/21/00002** – Conversion of existing storage barn to living accommodation at Fender House, 6 Brookside Rd. AWAITING DECISION.
3. **39/21/00003** – Application for Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (as for 39/21/00002 above). AWAITING DECISION.
4. **39/21/00005** – Erection of wooden garden shed/office, Cheryton, Otterhampton. PERMISSION GRANTED.
5. **39/21/00006** – Single storey extension to side elevation, 4 Fender Orchard. PERMISSION GRANTED.
6. **39/21/00007** – Erection of two storey elevation, 67 Estuary Pk. PERMISSION GRANTED.
7. **39/21/00008** – Loft conversion and erection of single storey rear extension, 28 Estuary Pk. THIS APPLICATION WAS SUPPORTED
8. **39/21/00009** – Loft conversion to living accommodation & dormer window, 5 Martyn Cl. THIS APPLICATION WAS SUPPORTED.

**103/21 FINANCE:**

1. **Bank Balances** - Current A/C £2505.11; Deposit A/C £14544.31; Reserve A/C £64826.38.

The Reserves A/C will significantly reduce when the invoice is paid for the refurbishment of the play area, the verge marker posts, replacement bollard and the wall refurbishment.

**2. The following payments were AGREED:**

- a) Mr K Preston - £302.00 (Apr, May & Jun gardening £192 and play area inspections £110)
- b) P Phillips & Son - £6374.00 (Verge marker posts, bollard repl. & refurb of wall by play area). Grant funded.
- c) B Leathwood - £214.88 (Solopress, printing Otter Tales for July)
- d) SALC - £218.33 (Affiliation fee Apr 2021-Mar 2022)
- e) Otterhampton Primary School - £50 (donation re June & July parish council meetings held at the school)
- f) SDC - £936.00 (annual grounds maintenance Apr-Jun 2021)
- g) Mrs A Prowse - £598.68 (Jul salary £528.53, plus misc. exp.£21.98, paint for village sign £30.78 & £14.39 Zoom sub)
- h) Open Spaces Society - £45.00 (Renewal of annual membership)
- i) Redlynch - £48110.40 (Play area resurfacing and supply and install of new seesaw). Grant funded.
- j) PKL Littlejohn LLP - £240.00 (Annual external auditor fee)
- k) Mrs A Prowse - £560.92 (Aug salary £528.53; Misc Exp £18.00 & £14.39 Zoom sub)

**3. Budget Monitoring Statement to 30.6.21**

There were no questions relating to the statement which showed expenditure to date of £5683.34 and income of £13001.77.

**4. Completion of the external annual audit to 31.3.21**

This annual audit of the accounts was approved with no issues raised. The formal Notice of conclusion of audit which must be displayed for a period of not less than 14 days has been placed on notice boards and on the Combwich.org.uk website

**104/21 CLERK'S REPLACEMENT:**

The Clerk had previously forwarded the proposed vacancy notice, job description and person specification. These were AGREED except to omit "sense of humour" as a desirable requirement. The closing date for applications is 13.10.21. The post will be advertised in Otter Tales, the SALC website, "Indeed" website and the Bridgwater Mercury. **Action: Clerk**

**105/21 STEART WARD:**

The small brick Church at Steart will be able to accommodate ashes interments once the ground has been formally consecrated, which should be happening shortly.

**106/21 ENHANCEMENTS:**

1. Re-surface the play area
  - a) The re-surfacing of the play area was completed during July. This will not eradicate the drainage issues, but it should offer significant improvement. A new seesaw was installed and also the damaged bollard at the play area entrance has been replaced. Many favourable comments have been received. Adults have been seen recently using the equipment. The seesaw which was damaged because of mis-use, cost £2800 to replace and we cannot afford to keep replacing play equipment. A reminder will be placed in Otter Tales of the age restriction on play equipment of 12 years and under. **Action: Clerk**
  - b) The paths inside and outside of the play area plus the surface beneath the shelter have deteriorated quite badly since the spring. This will be addressed by seeking advice on the way forward and then producing a contract specification and going out to tender. **Action: Clerk/B Birkenhead.**
2. Verge marker posts and refurbishment of the wall by the play area  
This work was completed during July with the exception of some of the pointing which the contractor has said he will undertake. It has tidied up the area and so far, has reduced the ad hoc, inconsiderate and often dangerous parking at this location.
3. Village sign  
B Birkenhead instigated the repair of the village sign which was carried out by Andy Turnball (Community Engagement, EDF) and his team. Our formal thanks have been sent to Andy. The paint was paid for by the parish council. The re-instatement of the sign has been generally well received by the community. The original posts will be removed shortly.
4. Repair of the Combwich buoy  
B Birkenhead has emailed A Turnball and is awaiting a response.

5. Wharf Rd speed and weight limit sign  
The new sign has been installed. EDF Hinkley B Station kindly paid for the sign. The parish council will pay for the installation.
6. Wharf Rd Landscaping  
At the village walk on 5.8.21, it was AGREED to ask EDF's ecologist if he could give us some advice for environment enhancement either side of the Wharf Rd. **Action: Clerk.** The trees will require some maintenance in the very near future.
7. Combwich Track potholes  
It was AGREED to ask Mr M Ingram to provide a quotation to repair the potholes along the Combwich track from the entrance to the first gate near the south clyce. **Action: Clerk**

**107/21 REVIEW OF ACTION LIST:**

1. General
  - a) No 1 - Housing need assessment, priority action following Brookside Rd planning application. No progress to report. Ongoing action.
  - b) No 2 – Village Sign. This is covered by an existing licence issued by Highways. Steart residents declined the offer of a bespoke sign for Steart.
  - c) No 6 – Broken kerb stones by bus shelter. B Birkenhead has chased. Action ongoing.
  - d) No 8 – Highway's survey of Church Hill, Ship Lane and School Lane and warning signage by the play area. The Clerk emailed Highways and was advised to contact K Tyson after 8.9.21 when she returns to work following a period of absence. Action ongoing.
  - e) No 9 – Continue to pursue safety enhancement for Dame Withycombe Hill residents crossing the C182. It was noted that there are "pedestrian crossing" signs elsewhere in Somerset on "A" roads. This will be pursued with K Tyson after 8.9.21 as per d) above.
  - f) No 13 – Communication mediums. A positive response was received from All Things Combwich Facebook Admin. However, it was AGREED that in parallel, we should discuss an option to have a parish council website. This will be an agenda item for October. **Action: Clerk**
  - g) No 14 – Boundary wall at Ship Lane property. A Welcome Pack was delivered but the Clerk was unable to speak to anyone at the property. The occupier(s) will be contacted regarding the apparent abandoned vehicle in the layby. **Action: Clerk**

**108/21 GOVERNANCE – EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY:**

The Clerk suggested if it was decided to adopt an Equality and Diversity policy, that we amend an example she found from another parish council. This was AGREED as proposed by J Evans and seconded by M Beckley.  
**Action: Clerk**

**109/21 CHANGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT:**

The decision to adopt a Unitary Council for Somerset to become "One Somerset" was approved in July 2021. This will almost certainly have an impact to us, but we will need to await further consultation and instruction.

**110/21 MEETING REPORTS:**

**3.7.21 – Otterhampton Wilder Community**

This had been reasonably well attended. This initiative will continue and it is hoped it will grow and prosper. A suggestion was made to map various gardens in the village to create wild garden corridors. The next session is planned for 26.9.21.

**22.7.21 – Transport Forum**

The notes from this meeting were previously circulated by A Darch. There were no comments.

**5.8.21 – Village Walk Actions**

- a) Vegetation obscuring the 30mph sign at the entrance to the village. This was cut back by R Prowse as a temporary solution.
- b) Weed spraying – SDC will be carrying out this task during September.
- c) Estuary Park uneven pavement surfaces and potholes – this was formally reported to Highways.
- d) Planning application 67 Estuary Park – this application was supported following confirmation that there were no side windows upstairs that may have caused overlooking of the neighbouring property.
- e) Wharf Rd – see minute 106/21/6 above.
- f) Dog bag dispensers – These were removed on 21.8.21.
- g) Overhanging branches and brambles on wall by village hall – this is the responsibility of the householder. Keep under review and possibly contact the householder if they get much worse.

- h) Ash tree opposite the village hall – a couple of the lower limbs may need to be removed as a safety measure. Possibly include within an updated tree survey.
- i) Potholes need repair on the 'parking strip' alongside the common. Report via "Fix my Street". **Action: Clerk.**
- j) Play area paths – see agenda item 106/21/1/b above.
- k) Outdoor table tennis table(s) – during the walk, councillors generally thought this would not be practical or well used and were concerned about the SSSI considerations. B Birkenhead will research the tables, the space required and what sort of base they would need to stand on. Natural England would need to be consulted and also parishioners to gauge their interest. L Parsons said the village hall has had a table tennis table for years and it is never used. The Chair asked for this to be an agenda item at the next meeting to enable a formal discussion to be held. **Action: Clerk**
- l) Combwich track potholes – see minute 106/21/7 above.
- m) Brownie Copse – the addition of using wooden sleepers from the wharf for seats was agreed and communicated to Nic Doble. B Birkenhead will carry out a survey of the gate and area beyond the Brownie Copse to consider whether there may be an opportunity to acquire some land for allotments.

#### 111/21 **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS:**

- 8.9.21 - Village Hall
- 26.9.21 – Otterhampton Wilder Community

#### 112/21 **CORRESPONDENCE:**

- a) Free Trees for town and parish council – we will apply for 2 medium standard trees; a wild cherry (for Crossways) and a crab apple (for the churchyard at Steart). **Action: Clerk**
- b) Water safety equipment for pill area – we will talk to EDF about this during its Combwich Wharf update on the 7.10.21
- c) Parishioner suggestions for mitigation funding
  - Request for table tennis table(s) on the common (see village walk actions, minute 110/21/k above).
  - Land behind Brownie copse for allotments (see village walk actions, minute 110/21/m above) and also at Brookside Rd. It is highly unlikely land would be available/affordable at Brookside Rd. In addition, the field is under water a lot of the time during the winter and periods of heavy rain.
- d) SDC Gambling Policy Consultation – no observations.
- e) Opening up safely and reconnecting communities fund – a suggestion was made to apply for funding to accommodate hybrid parish council meetings for example. Currently this is not an option available to us, so unlikely funding would/could be granted for this purpose. However, L Parsons will check if this facility could be provided using the village hall projector.
- f) County Lines Drugs, Cuckooing and Teen Gangs – It was AGREED to register an interest in this subject with Nether Stowey Parish Council and that we may have a councillor able to attend. **Action: Clerk**
- g) Training events with Breakthrough Communications – no one declared an interest in the courses.
- h) Future parish elections – following the Unitary Council creation, councillors AGREED to the suggestion to bring forward elections to May 2022 to remain in sync with principal authority elections and to avoid additional costs. **Action: Clerk**

#### GENERAL LIST

- a) Thank you letter from Combwich School for the parish council's donation of £50 for parish council meetings held at the School whilst the village hall was shut for refurbishment.
- b) SDC Parks Assistant – a parish resident reported that the outdoor gym equipment at the play area was not working correctly. This was checked and there is nothing wrong with the equipment. The Clerk responded accordingly.
- c) SDC – Free cycle parking stands – the Clerk advised businesses throughout the parish that this scheme was available to them.
- d) Somerset Medal for Helen Jowett – this will be presented at a later date as Helen was unable to attend the formal event.
- e) Otterhampton Village Hall Committee – advised that the Hall is available for bookings to all regular users via Peter Cashin. The Clerk responded re parish council meetings for the next year.
- f) Village Hall update as at 13.7.21 – The original costing in the grant application was exceeded but this phase, with the main contractor to complete the outstanding refurbishment and identified desirable extras (some savings made) are within the main grants awarded of £283400. The Trustees have incurred additional costs from their general funds of circa £2k for waste disposal and off-site storage. Councillors are very impressed with the refurbishment.

- g) Paul Gripton – Thank you letter regarding the installation of the verge market bollards on the verge alongside the play area as a safety and general enhancement initiative.
- h) SDC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Return for contributions received for 2020/21. The Clerk has submitted a NIL return as the parish council has not received any CIL contributions over the past year. The parish council has CIL receipts from previous years amounting to £246 (from 2018/19).

**113/21 REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES:**

1. **Public Rights of Way (PRoW) – B Birkenhead** - B Birkenhead has contacted Wessex Water to clear the vegetation on the PRoW near the Dame Withycombe Cottages as it is on its land.
2. **Village Hall** - L Parsons reported that there are “snaggings” to be attended to; modern furnishings are to be procured (such as curtains for the hall) new windows in the bar and the installation of the disability ramp.
3. **Otter Tales** - The deadline for articles is 1 September.
4. **School** - R Perrett had previously sent a report to councillors. She has requested a meeting with the Head when school returns after the summer recess.

**114/21 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 7 October 2021, 7.00pm, preceded by an EDF update on Comwich Wharf. 6.30pm at Otterhampton Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 8.55pm

Signed: Original signed by B Birkenhead

(Acting Chair)

Date: 7.10.21