

DRAFT Minutes of the Winsford Annual Assembly

Held on Thursday 9th May 2024 at 7.30pm in Winsford Village Hall

Present: Colin Wilkins (CW) Chairman of the Parish Council), Jennifer Yates (Clerk to the Parish Council) and 27 parishioners and guests, including parish councillors Ian Brooks and Mike Hillier

Colin Wilkins, opened the meeting at 7.30pm and welcomed everyone.

Apologies – Sarah and Jonathan Cox, David Weir.

Winsford Recreation Association – Frazer Laurence

The purpose of the Association is to oversee and manage the facilities within the village comprising of the field, the pavilion and the tennis courts and the new field left to the village by Ann Le Bas. There is a clause in their agreement which allows for charitable events to be held in the interests of the parish which provides both social and financial benefits.

The 100 club raises between £2,500 and £2,800 per year. £1,100 becomes prizes and the rest covers costs for insurance, fire inspections for the pavillion, hedge cutting and other maintenance. Events raise further funds, these have included skittles, duck racing, a Santa event, a Neil Diamond themed music night, and a Halloween event. Also Sue Hayes held a garden party. Profits were approx. £2,500 to go into their rainy day fund for future expenses and events. Events planned include several of the above again with the music night now being a Jersey Boys theme and also the introduction of a race night. Fundraising has a large target as the new tennis courts will be very expensive (quote of £33,000). Grants will be applied for.

The cricket club maintain the field, however the WRA have updated the pavilion facilities this year, with a new water boiler. They also contribute towards the costs of the mowers used by the cricket club. The tennis courts have been weeded and sprayed. The shed has also been repaired.

The new tennis field will provide extra recreation space with benches and football posts, and will be regularly mowed. A bench has been donated by Bridget Ryles family and thanks were given for this, and also thanks given to Sue Hayes and the Village Hall committee for donating £750 towards the grass cutting. Further thanks were expressed to Ian and Ellen for their donations.

There has been a request to land a helicopter on the field for a six times during the shooting season. There does not seem a reason to refuse as they will pay towards the use, but some concerns have been raised. A vote has been proposed and is being organised with each villager being able to vote.

Thanks were given to the WRA trustees and fundraising volunteers and all who support the WRA events and 100 club.

Parochial Church Council – Brigadier David Godsall

Thanks were given to all who have rallied around during recent absence of the Church Warden. David Weir has sent his apologies for the meeting, as he has 8 parishes to support, but it must be noted that he manages to support regular events and services in the parish.

The Church is a Grade One listed building which brings its challenges. It is very important to the people of the village and is well supported. The floodlights have been replaced recently as arranged by Brenda Staples who was thanked for all that she did. Contributions towards the cost are welcome. Thanks were expressed to Mel Mileham and her team for their work on the flowers, and new volunteers are welcome. The flowers are often praised, including in the visitors book.

The Choir have sung at all major local festivals in the area. They will be singing for the RNLI on 9th June. A bequest from Jeanette Sinclair which allowed for the purchase of an electric piano. More voices are always welcome.

There is a new lead on the bellringing team. All six bell ropes have been replaced recently. The team have rung at all of the other towers in the benefice. There are two certified trainers and new ringers are welcome at the Tuesday evening sessions.

Winsford Village Hall – Sue Hayes

It has been a very successful year. The coffee club is regularly attended by 20-30 people each week. The funds raised have enabled donations of £2,200 for the bus shelter, £500 towards the medicine delivery van and £750 to the WRA for grass cutting in the new field.

Bowls are held on Tuesday afternoons and new members are welcome, please see John Titcombe. Keep Fit and Circuit training are very popular.

The Wynn Club has had a good year, with visitors including a wildlife photographer, and a talk re recycling plastics from Keith Hunt from the Precious Earth shop. A Christmas Lunch was also held. Sue is working with Upton Coaches to organise some day trips and members will get a discount of 25%.

There is a barn dance planned for 28th September. More Movies is popular and they will start again from September. Craft Club is continuing on the second Tuesday of each month. Table Tennis and Pickle Ball are also going well. Other upcoming events will include big breakfasts and a whist drive.

Thanks were expressed to Sue and her team for all they do from attendees.

Avon and Somerset police presentation – PC Michelle Haines

Fraud is an ongoing problem which targets people of all ages. Many perpetrators are from overseas and hard to catch so prevention is extremely important. Fraud represents 41% of reported crime. There were 9,000 reports last year in Avon and Somerset alone. £121,000,000 was known to be lost with the true figure almost certainly higher with unreported losses and crimes. It is estimated that only 20% is reported.

Attendees were urged to adopt the 'Take 5' rule. Always take five minutes to think before taking any action re what is being asked of you. The fraudsters put you under pressure to act quickly, it is one of their strategies to express urgency but if you take time to think and pay attention to how what they are saying makes you feel you will often realise that it is not appropriate to do as they say.

Computer fraud is often in the form of people calling or contacting you pretending to be from your internet service provider. They will ask you to download something which will then give them complete access to your laptop or computer.

Romance and dating fraud. Victims are usually contacted through social media or dating sites. The fraudsters will have a range of excuses as to why they can't meet you, but will then ask for money. Only communicate with them through the original site, do not pass on your personal details, as they will try to move you onto that.

There have been a number of threatening calls, texts and emails from people pretending to be the HMRC recently so be very careful if contacted. Also be wary of anyone pretending to be from the bank and saying your account has been compromised. They will ask you to move money into a 'safe' account which is actually theirs.

Motor Tax is another current scam. This usually comes via email and can look genuine. You can report suspicious emails by going to the three dots at the top right and selecting the phishing option.

Whatsapp – victims are being contacted by someone claiming to be a family member who has lost their phone and has borrowed a friend's, and asking for money.

Do make sure phone calls have been properly ended – they will try to keep your line open. Also, they can disguise the numbers they are calling from to appear to be ones you know so again always take five before acting on any requests.

Always report suspicious activity to the Action Fraud team so they can build up a picture of current scams. The PSCOs will attend the village as much as possible dropping into the coffee mornings and carrying out bike marking etc.

Henry Leigh Trust – Colin Wilkins

The Trust was set up to support the education of up to 25 year olds in the village. The funds are from the proceeds of the sale of Withypool School. The village representative is Keith Lindop. They will support all kinds of lessons including music lessons, swimming lessons, computer training etc. Two of the local families have benefitted recently.

George Joyce Trust – Colin Wilkins

This Trust was set up using the proceeds of the sale of the 126 acre East Nurcott Farm and House in 1652. £16,000 a year is received from rent annually. The beneficiaries are in Wootton Courtenay, Cutcombe and Winsford. The committee pay out funds but the details are kept private.

Winsford Village Green Trust – Colin Wilkins

The Trustees are the seven parish councillors.

This name has been changed from Winsford Green and Recreation Charity Trust to avoid confusion with the Winsford Recreation Trust. The word Charity has been dropped as the Village Green does not receive donations or charge for the use of the ground. Charges are met by the proceeds of the old village hall which was sold in 1990, with the fund currently at £26,000, with further funds of £3,500 from the interest raised, which is used to pay for mowing and maintenance. Funds have been invested this year in registering the land as advice had been received that while there was a history of it being donated it had not been registered to the Trust.

During the last year a donation of a bench was made by the Gill family. There was also a donation of £4,000 to be used towards updating the facilities on the Green and this will be used for replacing the benches, including one which provides wheelchair space. Any funds remaining will be spent on a waste bin. Thanks were given to Mike Hillier for his time doing work on organising the purchase of wooden slats for the bridge, and his hard work in installing them making the bridge much safer.

The Green has always been maintained by volunteers, however they are no longer able to continue and the Trust are seeking a local contractor to carry out this maintenance.

Winsford Parish Council – Colin Wilkins

The meeting was paused to remember Dave Williams and John Maunder who passed on during the last year.

Thanks were given to the other six member of the Parish Council; Kevin Connell, Mel Mileham, Bryony Neal, Ian Brooks and Mike Hillier who give of their free time to serve the community. Furthermore, thanks were expressed to the Somerset Councillors Steven Pugsley and Frances Nicholson who attend the meetings and support the Council by providing information and by following up on issues raised.

Finance – this year the Council faced a very difficult decision when setting the precept due to the financial emergency at Somerset Council. A letter had been issued stating that all non statutory processes such as verge/hedge cutting, ditch and gully clearance and salt bins would no longer be provided and therefore the Parish Council would have to provide those services going forward. Taking into account the predicted carry forward and savings it was decided to add £2,000 to the precept to ensure that these could continue for safety reasons. Since then Somerset Council have reversed that decision until 2025 and the additional funds will be allocated to the reserve account and used next year instead. It is hoped that with the support of the Local Community Network these costs may be shared with other parishes to reduce spending.

Highways – from 1st January to 19th April traffic through the village increased three fold due to the road closure on the B3223 due to major subsidence works, a project which cost nearly £1,000,000. During this time the contractors checked and cleaned signage every day and kept the Parish Council well informed of progress. Somerset Council carried out a speed monitoring exercise over three months and found that the average speed through the village was 32mph, and a further speed display set up in the village found that only 3% of vehicles exceeded the speed limit. The bend at Larcombe Foot will now have permanent bend signs, with repairs to the damaged verges planned to

take place. The leat on Halse Lane continues to be a problem, and there is an issue re who owns it and therefore Somerset Council are hesitant to put in preventative repairs, although if it collapses they will be liable to repair it at that time. The Parish and Somerset Councillors are continuing to urge them to take action sooner rather than later.

The Bus Shelter – during the year the Parish Council took ownership of a new bus shelter after the old shelter was damaged in a storm. The shelter was funded from a grant from Sue Hayes and her Village Hall committee and the whole village really appreciate her continuing fund raising achievements. The original shelter contained two benches donated in 1939 by Mr Seligman. These have been renovated to a very high standard by Dave Mileham. One is now in the new shelter, with the other overlooking the river Wynn by the car park.

The new shelter is designed to incorporate a shed at the rear. This is being used to store new resilience equipment bought with a grant from Somerset Council, to be used in any emergency including flooding or a major incident. Thanks were given to Councillor Mel Mileham for all of the time and effort she has put into the village resilience and emergency planning and ensuring that the Council were successful in receiving this grant.

The Emergency Mast – the new mast is at the top of Halse Lane. It is now operational for the emergency services. They use the EE network so anyone with an EE mobile phone can now access this signal. There are plans to extend the mast, by the end of June. This will then enable the mast to be used by other providers so tenders will be sought after that work is carried out and it hoped that by June 2025 Winsford will have a complete network supply, and this will enable smart meters to operate effectively too.

The Defibrillator – During the last year the defibrillator has had a new battery and new pads at the cost of over £300. Arrangements will be made to affix a light as it has been noted it is hard to see in the dark. The defibrillator is registered on the national network and is now checked by Councillor Bryony Neal on a monthly basis. During the year Councillor Mileham arranged for first aid and defibrillator training for 24 residents of the parish and the Council would like to thank those who gave up their time to attend this training.

Going Forward

The car park is a disgrace to such a picturesque village in a conservation area. It belongs to Somerset Council who have been approached about it but with their financial situation it is a low priority for them. Our Somerset Councillors are lobbying for it either to be leased or gifted to the Parish Council so the necessary improvements can take place.

The Parish Council will continue to pursue a solution to the unfinished bungalow in Ash Lane. They are also aware of another house in the village which has not been occupied or visited in the last four years and are taking advice about what can be done in both cases.

Questions and comments

Concern was raised that the extra traffic has made worse some areas of the highway that already needed patching. Councillor Wilkins will follow up on this.

It was reported that the car park is not just an eye sore but also dangerous as a resident recently tripped and fell due to a pot hole. It was pointed out that had it been a County Council car park with charges and income it would have been dealt with. It was also mentioned that as Exmoor National Park Authority had been enthusiastic about the conservation area, which includes the car park, it would be worth seeking their support in dealing with this. Concern was raised re introducing new signage to the car park along with tarmac and white lines, Councillor Wilkins was able to dispel these as rumours which are not planned. Replacement signs would be of a similar nature to the current dilapidated signage. A further suggestion was that it would be a good idea to introduce an honesty box to raise funds towards repairs.

It was mentioned that the piece of grass between the bus shelter and Howtown Lane has been badly cut up by vehicles. Councillor Mike Hillier has recently carried out some repairs, but cannot move the stones nearer to the highway due to highway restrictions.

Thanks were given to Councillor Wilkins and all other Councillors for all their hard work and for keeping people informed during information on the website.