

# **DRAFT Minutes of the Winsford Annual Assembly**

## **Held on Thursday 27 April 2023 at 7.30pm in Winsford Village Hall**

Present: Colin Wilkins (CW) Chairman of the Parish Council), Jennifer Yates (Clerk to the Parish Council) and 31 parishioners and guests, including parish councillors Kevin Connell (KC), Mel Mileham, Ian Brooks, Bryany Neal and Mike Hillier, and also Councillor Steven Pugsley.

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

### **Apologies – Mr and Mrs Godsall and Walter Godsall**

1. CW outlined how the meeting will be run. He requested approval of the minutes of the last assembly held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Proposed MH, seconded MM

2. **Winsford Church Council – Brenda Staples**

Maintenance has been carried out on the Church Roof and the grounds. Cutting back of undergrowth has revealed a new, previously hidden, gravestone.

Reverend Butt has left and the rector is now working hard to manage eight parishes.

Events over the last year have included the Jubilee, the Memorial to the Queen, as well as Christmas and Easter which were well attended.

The choir is growing in numbers, as are the bellringers. CW is leading training for new ringers, assisted by Sue Atkins from Exford. The ringers have supported numerous village occasions in particular the Queen's memorial.

At the annual bellringers skittles event the Winsford team won both the skittles and the quiz.

The bells are due to be inspected by Mr Butt.

3. **Winsford Recreation Association – Fraser Lawrence**

The Recreation Association was set up in the early 1990s to provide recreation facilities for the parish and to run events for charitable purposes for the parish. There are eight trustees. Maintenance has been carried out on the tennis courts and the nets replaced, and consideration is being given to when a new surface may be needed.

The cricket association look after the grounds well which is appreciated.

Flooding can be an issue on the lower area of the field, damaging the fencing. A risk assessment has been done with regards to the river if fencing is removed.

Numerous successful events have been held including a very successful skittles/duck race (£350 approx), an Elvis night (£600 approx), a Jazz night (£300 approx), the proceeds of which go towards the Association reserves to help with repairs to the pavilion and other upkeep. Other events which were popular were Santa and Halloween.

There is a 100 club – new subscriptions are available, details are on the village website.

Once registered members become eligible for monthly draws, with special draws held in the summer and at Christmas.

Plans include 6 events in the coming year, please do email Fraser if you have ideas for something new or different you would like considered.

The field and tennis courts will continue to be run as now, and discussions are taking place re the new field (land left by Ann Le Bas). It needs to be sustainable and not difficult to care for, and flood resistant, in keeping with the village and of use to the village. A possible use would be further recreation space with an orchard and benches but this is not yet decided.

#### **4. Winsford Flood Resilience Plan – Mel Mileham**

This was first mentioned in the 2015/16 Village Assembly but was not taken forward at that time. Since then a programme has been put in place by Somerset Council called Somerset Prepared, and the subject remains a priority for the new Council.

Within the village there is now a group of volunteers who will support in the event of flooding and the Council would like to thank them for their support.

The Parish Council has been developing a plan and this has included working with the Environment Agency (EA) and other stakeholders. Mrs Mileham has been in regular communication with the Home Office and Openreach about the lack of mobile phone service, the new emergency services mast and the changeover from the copper wire system to the new broadband fibre which will leave the village without communication in the event of a power cut.

Parishes have been encouraged to develop strategies to be prepared. Winsford Parish Council have applied for a grant which has been approved on this date, this will allow purchase of kit which can be used in an emergency such as lighting and drain clearing equipment, and go towards storage costs. It will also cover defibrillator and first aid training for some villagers.

The Environment Agency and flood group guidance has shown there is an expectation for homeowners to take responsibility for being prepared for flooding, particularly riparian owners. The Risk Management Authority can offer advice and support. Different agencies have diverse responsibilities, for example the river Exe is managed by the EA, but the Winn Brook comes under the Lead Local Flood Authority. The EA have asked Winsford Parish Council to distribute short copies of 'Living on the Edge' which will be given to Riparian owners, the full version is available on the EA website.

It is essential that the village is well prepared, and residents are advised to register on the EA website for the flood warning system. It has been the experience of villagers that the Winn is more likely to 'flash flood' so it is important to be prepared.

An attendee mentioned that if a household are prepared to push hard enough it is possible to obtain a battery from Openreach when the home is changed over from copper wire, however you would also need to have an old style phone as modern ones don't work in a power cut.

#### **5. George Joyce Charity Trust – Colin Wilkins**

This trust was formed in the eighteenth century when land was given to Cutcombe, Winsford and Wootten Courtenay. They meet three times a year with a Somerset Agent to collect rents from the house and land, and then this is distributed to the needy in those three parishes, or to support projects in the parishes. This year they contributed £1000 to the fundraising for the new swings on the Village Green.

#### **6. Henry Leigh Educational Charity Trust – Colin Wilkins**

Mr Keith Lindop is the village's current representative on this Trust. Their objective is to provide grants to Winsford, Exford and Withypool parish members to be used for educational purposes. People up to the age of 25 are eligible.

They meet four times a year. Residents can apply online or through Mr Lindop if they have family of that age and would like to apply for support. CW stressed this is a grant, it is not charity and urged families to make good use of this support.

#### **7. Winsford Village Hall Committee – Susan Hayes**

It has been a very good year for the village hall, and the first year back in full use since the covid pandemic. The coffee club is very successful, and the new Village Green swings were largely funded by these meetings. They are now working towards raising funds to replace the village bus shelter which has been badly damaged in storms.

Mr Titcombe has restarted the bowls club. There are also keep fit circuit training classes which are very popular. More Movies events have also been popular and well supported. There is also a well attended regular craft club. Yoga and pilates classes have proved less popular and will be discontinued for now.

The Winn Club is starting back up and their first trip will be to the Devon County Show, followed by a trip to Rosemoor and Dartington Glass in June. There are plans to hold talks in the winter months so that events continue all year round.

There will be a plant sale on 20<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **8. Winsford Trust and Winsford Parish Council – Colin Wilkins**

The Trust are responsible for the Village Green, and the members of the committee are the same as the Parish Council.

Thanks were expressed to Mike Hillier for keeping the Green so well maintained, and to Mr and Mrs Hunt for the Christmas Tree decorations and lights.

The swings were condemned in the last inspection so the Trust have now replaced those, with the large majority of funds being contributed as donations from Sue Hayes and the Charity Trusts. They are now in place and are being enjoyed by the village and visitors. CW wished to publicly thank Ian Brooks and Mike Hillier for their hard work researching and preparing the ground for the swings, and for their consideration to the health and safety requirements.

A quote has been received for replacing some of the slats on the bridge which are in poor repair and it is hoped work will be carried out this year.

Volunteers are always welcome to support with maintenance on the Green.

A grant has been applied for which will help update facilities on the Village Green, including benches, bins and the skittle alley.

It was pointed out by one attendee that both swings are at the same height, making them a little low for larger children. Mr Hillier will look into whether this can be changed.

Prior to his report on the Parish Council Mr Wilkins asked all in attendance to pause to remember those in the parish who have passed away during the last year;

Julia Amies-Green, Chris How, Bryan Smart, Brian Mogg (who lived in the village for many years), Simon Meade, Peter Nicholls, and Bridget Ryle.

There has been a change of membership on the council this year following the democratic election which took place in May 2022. Eight people put themselves forward and seven were duly elected.

CW publicly thanked the councillors who left; Mr David Luscott, Mr Patrick Watts-Mabbott and Mr John Bray who left after 40 years of service to the community.

CW also thanked the current councillors for their hard work and also Frances Nicholson and Steven Pugsley for their contribution and the wisdom and advice they bring to the meetings.

The precept has been maintained at the same level this year as last year, and the reserve is being built up to the recommended 50% to provide support if needed. Grant money received for reconnecting the community was not all used, so it was donated to the swings fund.

Highways matters – improvements with drainage have meant better road safety in places.

Resurfacing has taken place on three roads in the village. There is now clear communication with the County with regards to highways and the Parish Council reports all faults and repair work which need to be carried out. Work in ongoing re Yellowcombe Leat and the new sign at the top of Halse Lane should be in place in the coming months.

The Ann Le Bas bench was unveiled last year and there has been much positive feedback as to how it is such a fitting tribute to a lady who did so much for the village.

The defibrillator is registered on the national network, a new battery and pads have been updated.

CW publicly thanked Sue Hayes and all who contributed for their tremendous fundraising achievements for the swings.

The new mobile phone mast is in place and is due to 'go live' in September this year. It is understood that the Home Office will put out to tender the opportunity for mobile phone providers to use it to provide a signal to the parish.

Celebrations were held last Summer to mark the Queen's Jubilee. This was very well attended and enjoyed, and CW expressed thanks to all who came and those who volunteered at the event.

Exmoor National Park have passed a vote to make the village into one of its conservation areas. The Parish Council and Park both offered opportunities for the villagers to ask questions and express views and the Parish Councillors recognised that there was a split view of this project, and this was reflected in their voting. More details are expected to come out from the National Park in the coming months.

With regard to housing Falcon have decided that there is no need for adding any further properties to their portfolio at this time.

Looking forward the bus shelter will need to be replaced, quotes have been obtained and plans are in place. Thanks given again to Sue Hayes who is fundraising for this project.

The Parish Council will be looking for support from Somerset Council with regard to the car park. The new County Council will be working as 18 local community networks (replacing the four district councils), and it is hoped that both this and the new conservation area status will help gain support for the necessary improvements. Re housing the Parish Council will continue to monitor what is happening with the empty property on Ash Lane with the hope of moving this forward. The Ann Le Bas field bequest is with solicitors so it should be near completion. The Exmoor Panel will now be replaced by the new Exmoor Local Community Network and the Parish Council will hold a seat on this, along with 22 other parishes.

**9. Public Forum** – no questions asked.

**10. Conclusion** – Mr Wilkins thanked the residents for their support and were pleased that people had been able to attend.

Details of the coronation weekend were shared.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 20.46.