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 26 parishioners and guests, including parish councillors Mel Mileham, Bryany Neal, Sarah Little, Kevin Connell and Mike Hillier. Somerset Councillor Steven Pugsley attended the meeting from 20.05.

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

Apologies – Councillor Ian Brooks, Somerset Councillor Frances Nicholson and Mr Mileham.

1. **Introduction:** Mr Wilkins explained that the purpose of the meeting is to share what the Parish Council have been working on, and aim to work on. Other local organisations are invited to join to expand the interest for attendees and have the opportunity to share their work too.
2. **Parochial Church Council – Brigadier David Godsal:** Recognition was given to Richmond Harding who is approaching 30 years as a Church Warden, by Brigadier Godsal who has himself done 17 years.

   Due to vicars now having multiple parishes to support there are fewer meetings now than would be wanted, especially now Nicola Butt has her own parishes. In April there were three services, but in May just one. Thanks were given to David Weir for his great pastoral work and his support and attendance at regular Winsford events and activities.

   The Church is a very important part of Winsford and is well supported. Mel Mileham and her team were thanked for their work keeping the flowers in the church looking so welcoming, as mentioned by numerous entries in the visitors book. The flower team also ensure floral displays are in place for weddings, funerals, church festivals and other special events and this is enormously appreciated. New Volunteers are always welcome. Sue Hayes was also thanked, along with Bev, for her constant support in fundraising. Thanks were also given to the Urrys for opening and closing the church each day, to Ian Chamberlin for keeping the flags appropriately flying, to the Debneys and Barrys for coping with the parking during services and events, and to the members of the PCC who give up a great deal of time and effort to make sure everything runs smoothly.

   As a Grade One listed building there are a lot of challenges and repairs to be done to maintain the Church. Community support, and some legacies help with this and donations are always welcome. There is currently scaffolding in place and much of the plasterwork has been removed from inside that area and above the school window. There has been a lot of damp, now fixed, but it will take up to a year for it to all be dry enough to replace the lime plaster. There are plans for a 'big breakfast' later in the year to fundraise towards this.

   The Benefice Choir is organised by Brenda Staples. She has reported that the choir has sung at all of the major festivals throughout the year, and events such as 'singing in the ring' at Cutcombe Market which attracted some new choir members. Other events included a fundraising event for the RNLI in the Village Hall. The 80th anniversary of VE day celebration was held in the Church with some singers and musicians dressing as Land Girls and performing songs from World War Two. It has been lovely to have new members, and more would be welcome. Brigadier Godsal thanked Brenda for all she has done, not just with the choir but also the organ.

The bell captain Carol Cottle reported that Winsford tower currently has five members and they regularly practice with the Exford ringers. During the summer months they will also be practicing on Tuesday nights in other local parishes, as far afield as Dunster. Most local towers were visited for ringing to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day. They also ring at most Sunday services across the Benefice, as well as at funerals and weddings. In September there will be a trip ringing at four Exmoor churches. During the summer there will be visiting ringers at the Benefice churches, helping keep the bells in good condition and ringing peals which is an aspiration for the current team. New members are always welcome and there are certified trainers available to support beginners.

3. **Winsford Recreation Association – Frazer Laurence:** The charter for the charity is to maintain the range of facilities including the cricket field, the pavilion, the tennis counts and the tennis court field. Also to do charitable events to benefit the member of the parish and raise funds towards the upkeep of the facilities.

   The cricket team take good care of the cricket pavilion. They have carried out some painting and maintain the mowing very well. They have also done some work on the hedges and it all looks great. Thanks were given to Andrew who has done a great deal of maintenance work. The tennis courts are in reasonable condition but are getting old at 33 years and funds of between £25,000 and £32,000 are being applied for to resurface them at some point. They are being weeded and resprayed. There is a new roof on the shed and this has also been repainted, thanks were given to Mike Hillier for his support with this. A pontoon and bridge has been put in place for when the field is very wet. The field is open for use and thanks were given to the Parish Council for the recent donation of some benches.

   Six events are held each year to raise funds. Race Night was a big success, along with skittles, a duck race and Jersey boys events. Halloween, Christmas and VE Day events were also well supported. Thanks were given to all who supported by organising and attending. Funds are also raised via the Hundred Club – up to £2,500 per year. Half of this goes on prizes and the rest funds insurance and other costs. This year there are increased costs due to a high water bill, new mowers and mole damage. However, costs largely broke even with just a very small loss. Upcoming events planned so far include Christmas, Halloween and a skittles/duck racing event. The arrangements for helicopters (from the local shoot) to use the field for a donation have been agreed on a pilot basis but not yet used.

   There has been a change of Trustees. Thanks were given to Mr and Mrs Luscott for their sterling service for a number of years. New members include Ian and Allen Chamberlain and Jo Laurence. Thanks were given to all Trustees for the amount of time given. Special thanks were given to Sue for Fundraising and for the lawn mowing team. New Trustees and helpers are always welcome.

   People were asked to make sure their 100 club subs were up to date. Questions were raised and Mr Laurence suggested that members of the 100 club can use the tennis courts but it would be good if they could also donate towards the new courts. Also it was suggested that cricket club members may be able to help with the mowing on the tennis field. The gap in the hedge could be widened to allow the cricket mower through.

4. **Winsford Village Archive – Mel Mileham:** Some documents and photographs have been saved for a long time, with records going back to the original formation of the village from the Norman period when the church was built, up to the present day.

However, there is little information on individual properties. In the 1990s Jan Faulkner worked very hard to begin collating documents and artifacts from multiple locations and sources, including photos, books, records and leaflets. After many months these were collated, indexed and stored in folders and the archive is stored in the Village Hall in cupboards built from a National Park Partnership fund.

The archive receives several enquiries each month, now dealt with by Mrs Mileham. There are over 3,000 individuals connected with Winsford on the Winsford 'family tree'. It has proved a useful source of information with regards to matters such as ownership, such as the car park, however this does not always guarantee action even once identified.

The Acland family used to own most of the land between Killerton and Holnicote, and were said to be able to ride between them without leaving their land. Until the 19th Century Exmoor was very remote. As toll roads and railways were introduced Exmoor became popular for hunting, shooting and fishing, and industries grew up to cater for these needs. In 1870 Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and his wife paid for a school to be built in Winsford for children between the ages of 5 – 12. Further change took place during World War One when most of the working men from the village were conscripted. For the centenary 'Winsford Remembers' was produced which uncovered much more than had been known about the villagers who served their country. From the names on the memorial plaque in the church 60 more men who had served were identified and the results can be seen in the file on the oak desk in the Church. The Acland family owned many of the farms and houses in the parish until 1926 when sales took place bringing big changes. Some changes in the 20th Century included;

Water – a system of small reservoirs in surrounding hills provided water storage to support the springs. The water was piped to the village, to be collected in buckets. Mains water eventually came to the village centre but more outlying areas still rely on boreholes.

Communication – in 1925 the telegraph/telephone exchange was put into the village, originally in Winn Cottage. Petrol pumps were initially installed in the 1920s, again at Winn Cottage before the garage was built in the 1950s. There was a TV arial up Halse Lane behind Hill House in the early 1980s. The cable ran down to the village but only really worked well in the centre.

Sanitation – the mains sewage station was put in in 1964.

Diocese – The vicar lived in the Old Vicarage (now Quarme Monceaux House) until it was sold in 1969 for £10,000. They then lived in Inceldon Hay which was renamed the Old Rectory. The cricket field was originally situated there and at this time Ann Le Bas offered land to the Parish Council to resite the ground and pavilion. The school was closed and sold in the 1990s.

Roads – Until the end of the 19th Century the main access to the village was through Yellowcombe track, Halse Lane, Furzehill/Upcott Lane, Exford Road and Ash Lane. These routes were basically packhorse/cart tracks hence the packhorse bridges and fords in the village. Between 1926 -28 a refurbishment took place on the Exford Road from Coppleham through to Brendon Two Gates.

Entertainment – Winsford has had its own clubs covering about every area of interest including sports, children's events, car boot sales, hunt balls, whist drives, hobby horse racing, pillow pole fighting, cross country racing, Barle boat races, bingo, discos, safari lunches, open gardens, sponsored events, ferret racing, talent competitions, amateur dramatics group, among others. In summary a happy, social village with lots going on and lots of fundraising and fun events.

A comment was made that people may like to find out more about their individual properties. Mrs Mileham said that there are records of sales in the archive. It was also asked if it may be possible to lay out things for people to view but Mrs Mileham felt that that would be too time consuming to organise at this time given that she is already busy following up on enquiries.

5. **George Joyce Charity Trust:** This charity was set up in 1652. 180 acres of land and a house were given to be relet and the profit used to support the poor in the parishes of Cutcombe, Winsford and Wootten Courtney. Now 165 acres are rented out. The house is empty and is being modernised before taking applications shortly. The Village Agent is involved in advising this charity.

6. **Henry Leigh Educational Trust - Debbie Debney:** Mrs Debney has recently taken over from Mr Keith Lindop who has retired after representing the village so well in the role for some time.

   The Trust is a charity established from the proceeds of the sale of the old Withypool Primary School in July 2006 and is named after the gentleman who originally gave the land for the school to be built on in 1876. The aim of the Trust is to provide monetary contributions from the interest on the original investment. These contributions are for the educational needs of persons under 25 who are, or who have been, resident in the area of benefit. Needs may include technical, artistic, social and physical training and the area of benefit includes the parishes of Withypool, Hawkridge, Exford, Simonsbath and Winsford.

   The Trust meets three times a year, and 55 grants were awarded in the last financial year. Recent applications are high with requests for contributions including funds for school trips, swimming lessons, trampolining, piano lessons, driving lessons and camera equipment for university. Applications are made by sending a form to the Trust secretary. The next deadline is 31st August. Details are in the Across Exmoor magazine, or the Trust website, or speak to Mrs Debney.

7. **Winsford Village Hall Committee – Sue Hayes:** There are numerous members of the committee as well as people who support with cleaning and hedge cutting now. The Village Hall is very busy, with something on most days now. The coffee club remains very popular and raises funds for many local facilities and groups, including gazebos for the village fete, Santa, Halloween and more including Exton church bell fund. Current events include Circuits on Mondays and Thursdays, Bowls on Tuesday afternoons, pickleball on Wednesdays, Table Tennis on Thursday evenings, Art on the first Thursday of every month and craft club on the second Tuesday of every month. They hold a craft fair in November selling the items that have been made raising funds to bring in specialists. Winn Club is still active, with talks during winter months and trips in the summer. The Hall is also hired out by external groups for a variety of reasons, most recently by the Exmoor Society when approximately 100 people attended. There are lots of upcoming events, the next being the Village Fete on August 9th.

8. **Winsford Parish Council – Colin Wilkins:** Firstly, some feedback from the Village Green Trust. Three new benches, including one which provides wheelchair access, have been installed on the Green with five previous benches being donated to the Recreation Association for Lower Meadow field. The benches need to be fixed down for safety reasons, and a new bin is being ordered to match them which will also be fixed in place to avoid being moved. Many thanks were given to Mike Hillier who has been

taking care of the mowing and tidying of the Green for some time and has recently decided to retire from this. His hard work and dedication were much appreciated. A new contractor has been hired and so far this is working out well, with him taking on additional work such as the Winn Brook. Mr Wilkins mentioned that the Trustees are proud of the ongoing work to keep the Village Green in good condition. The new benches are being well used.

On behalf of Winsford Parish Council Mr Wilkins welcomed everyone to their annual meeting. He is now in his sixth year of being Chair of the Council. He asked the attendees to take a moment to remember the members of the Parish who died during the last year; John Davey, Michael Brunton, Maz Matravers, Steve Griffin and Ollie Davis. He also mentioned Kath Read who has now moved to East Sussex following 25 years in the village and is surely missed. Mr Wilkins named and thanked all of the Parish Councillors for their hard work and dedication to the Parish. The meetings are now held monthly which helps keep on top of the planning applications and other business. Thanks were also given to the clerk. Many thanks were given to the Somerset Councillors Steven Pugsley and Frances Nicholson to try to attend every meeting and kindly follow up on the village's behalf on matters at Somerset County when they can. Their hard work is greatly appreciated.

Re highways there is little to feed back with most being in good condition other than the Steep. When potholes are reported they have all been dealt with, usually within three weeks. The county withdrew plans to devolve responsibility for hedges and verges to the Parish Council although they may reinstate this at a later date. Some residents raised concerns re speeding in the village and Mr Wilkins liaised with the local police team who arranged for a speed trap to be placed in the 30mph zone, the information from which is now being analysed. If the data does show concerns they will do an unannounced visit with their speed guns. It does seem that speeding is particularly noticeable when the hunt is in or around the village.

The village resilience plan, put together by Mel Mileham, is on the Parish Council website. She obtained a grant from Somerset Prepared for equipment and that is now stored in the back of the new bus shelter to be available in the event of an emergency. Thanks were given to Mel Mileham and Mike Hillier for their work on putting this together. During last winter there was a power cut for 38 hours in the village leaving the village completely cut off. It has been recognised that there is a need to look at ways to support the elderly or others in need at such times. Discussions are taking place about the possibility of purchasing a generator for the village hall which could act as a place of safety in an emergency but it seems grants are not available for this. The defibrillator has been used this year. The pads and battery have been replaced and a solar powered light has been put in place to make it easier to see if needed at night. A new cabinet may be needed within a couple of years. Mrs Neal carries out monthly checks on the machine and registers it with the national network for defibrillators. The Parish Council now plan to buy and install a bleed kit next to it which can be used in the event of an emergency whilst waiting for the emergency services to arrive.

The new mast on Winsford Hill has resulted in the Emergency Services having much better coverage in the area, and has also had the positive effect of EE now providing a good mobile phone service in the area. It is believed that in June or July bids will be taken from other providers hoping to use the mast to widen their network coverage in the area too.

Financially the Parish Council were pleased to be able to hold their precept at very similar levels to last year. There is a good carry forward due to the changes at Somerset Highways, which means that some funds can be put into the deposit account

and bringing it nearer to the advised 50% reserve that is recommended to be held in case of emergency.
Mr Wilkins recently carried out an informal housing survey noting the usage of the properties in the village. 10% of properties are used as second homes, with 5% being holiday lets and 12% being used for social housing. There were six empty homes, three of which are for sale. The Parish Council are continuing to monitor the long term empty homes along with the Somerset Councillors in the hope that these will not remain unoccupied for too much longer.

Mr Wilkins recently did some hard work with the Somerset Councillors re a problem for local families who had been told they could no longer get school transport to Kingsmead in Wiveliscombe. Their hard work has been successful and for those families the transport is restored, although going forward it will not be provided for others.

Looking forward it is hoped that some progress will be made with the Car Park which is owned by Somerset Council but not maintained by them. Mr Wilkins has been liaising with the conservation area officer about this and it is hoped that his support will help raise this as an issue at Somerset. He is also working with Magna about parking issues on a couple of sites in the village, trying to determine what is their land and what they would expect. Finally he will continue to work on the long term empty property issue, as their gardens become overgrown and unkempt.

Questions and comments.
One resident reported a near miss at Edbrooke having been pushed across the white line on the blind bend due to multiple parked vehicles.

9. It was mentioned that is would be very helpful to have street signs on some of the smaller lanes within the village that have none, particularly for delivery drivers. Mr Pugsley advised that a request should be made to the County team re this.
An attendee wished to pass on their thanks to Jane for making room available for the village shop. Also, to Colin Wilkins and other volunteers for sorting out their newspapers. It was noted by several people that the shop provides an excellent service to the village, even having their prescriptions delivered there for collection.
It was mentioned that the change of use at the Tea Room has been a loss to the village as visitors very much enjoyed sitting by the river enjoying the peaceful village.
Walter Godsal passed his thanks to everyone who keep in touch and go and visit him. He very much enjoyed his 100th birthday. It was mentioned that Prunella was 99 last week too.
Mr Wilkins is doing his walk raising money for the dementia charity again this summer and all donations would be gratefully received.
Mr Wilkins closed the meeting with the comment that he has been living in the village for 14 years now, and it is a very active community and an excellent village for pulling together towards good causes.

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 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.