

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Thursday 4th April 2023, 7.30-8.00 pm in the Village Hall

Minutes

24/1 Attendance

Councillors in attendance Chair, K Every, I Farmer, R Barton, A Rich & N Parsons.

Also in attendance: Somerset Councillor J Kenton, Clerk, Mrs S Coombe, & 2 members of the parish.

24/2 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marshall & Spencer.

24/3 Minutes

Minutes for the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting were received & approved by all councillors.

24/4 Chair's Report

The chair reported that the Parish Council has had another successful year. Since the last Parish Meeting there have been a total of 19 planning applications for them to discuss & comment on.

The villagers once again came together, to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. Commencing with a bring your own tea party with activities for the children followed by a Bar, Band, Disco & Refreshments in the Evening. A good time was had by all those in attendance.

There were initial problems with the new website so the PC have recently instructed a company to design a WCAG 2.1 AA compliant website. Bucklandstmarypc.gov.uk is still under construction but is now live. The PC have also spent much of the year attempting to get the New CBO off the ground. Currently still in the initial planning stages but we hope to have an update soon.

South Somerset Council merged into the Unitary Somerset Council on 1st April 2023. As the year progressed Somerset taxpayers faced a & very sobering future for their public services as the local authority scrambled to avoid effective bankruptcy. They voted through plans to set a balanced budget for the coming financial year but gave a stark warning of significant challenges in the years ahead. Since declaring a financial emergency in response to the soaring cost of social care, Somerset Council have done everything in their power to avoid a S114 notice. Despite Somerset Council setting a balanced budget it has a broken model for funding local government and social care which urgently needs a national solution. The Chief Financial Officer provided assurance around the estimates and the adequacy of reserves for this year, but also warned there is 'high level of concern around future years and the financial sustainability of the Council'. It highlighted a need for new and significant savings in future years and concluded that based upon current forecasts there is a high likelihood that a Section 114 notice will need to be issued in respect of the 2025/26 financial year.

24/5 To receive verbal reports from representatives of village clubs and societies.

The following reports were received from representatives from the village clubs and societies invited to the meeting:

Bishopswood Short Mat Bowls Club was represented by Roy Harkness who gave the following report: Thank you for the Council's Grant of £120.00 to Bishopswood Short Mat Bowls Club, it is gratefully received; the money will be used to purchase new mats. They are hoping to obtain a grant for some new rollers. The money from last year was used to purchase 4 new Jacks, thank you very much for that. Sadly numbers are dwindling but we manage to keep going.

Buckland & Bishopswood Cricket Club was represented by Ian Every who gave the following report: On behalf of the Cricket club, I would like to thank the Parish council for its generous donation and continued support. It continues to be difficult maintaining the club in general. Last year we needed to invest in some new grass cutting equipment.

Unsure yet as to what the money will be spent on as we've not yet had our AGM however we did have to purchase new training equipment.

The previous few seasons have been very challenging for our format of sport and just keeping the club running is proving more and more challenging. Our aim for the club is to get it to the same standard of other teams within the area like the changing & kitchen facilities & grass cutting equipment. Once again we thank you for the continued support.

Baby & Toddlers, Willow & FOBS

BSM Babys & Toddlers sent the following written report: We'd like to say a big thank you for your continued support and donation towards the running of our volunteer lead toddler group. Without your donation we could not continue to run the group. Your donation will help us continue to provide a resourceful, fun and safe environment for the babies and toddlers to play. We have noticed we are lacking in some areas of toys this year; we are looking into investing in a train track, with baby and toddler friendly trains, cars and accessories. We think this will provide a new element to the group we are currently lacking. As you can imagine, these baby safe toys don't come cheap. The donation is a massive help in not only allowing us to buy these toys, but continuing to support the costs of the hall which have increased this last year, also going towards providing refreshments for parents/guardians and healthy snacks for our little ones too. Once again, thank you for thinking of our group and your continued support.

Willow Class & FOBS sent the following report. We would like to take the time to thank you all for the kind donation of £120 for our school and £120 for our Nursery. The school council have conducted a school survey asking the children what they would like for our school. Most children have asked for soft furnishings to make the outside hut in the garden, a calm and cosy place to sit quietly during break times. Collectively, the children have asked for waterproof outdoor soft furnishing, rugs and outdoor storage boxes for books and colouring to enhance this outdoor provision for all. Nursery conducted their own pupil survey to ascertain what they would like to spend their donation on. Many of the children have requested a new blue tent to play in because they can take their favourite toys and play inside the tent. Mrs Napper has used this as an opportunity for the children to look together and select their favourite one. Nursery will therefore spend their donation on two much needed sleeping mats, one dark sleeping tent and one play tent for the children to enjoy. Thank you again for your kind and thoughtful donation.

Wilder Buckland sent the following report. Wilder Buckland was established as a community volunteer group with the aim of celebrating and supporting the local natural environment through a programme of awareness raising and community action.

We have had a very busy and successful year with several new initiatives. We ran four public events, focusing on using the iNaturalist app for wildlife recording, a Big Bat Count with Somerset Bat Group, a bumblebee ecology and ID day and a Fungi Foray at Dommett Wood. We had over 110 people attend across these events, and as a result we now have more people recording the wildlife they see and have increased the number of bat records for the parish, including identifying some rare species in various parts of the parish, such as the church.

In addition to public events, our dormouse survey programme has started to return records, with two new locations in the Little Hill area.

Our work on the field behind the village hall continues to develop and last summer we recorded more species of wildflower with Yellow Rattle, Greater Knapweed, Ox-Eye Daisy and Red Clover, all of which are as a result of our sowing in the previous year. The longer grass and additional flowers have meant a greater diversity of bees, hoverflies, moths and butterflies have all been found in this part of the field and you can really hear the difference with the buzzing and chirruping. We are very grateful to Les for cutting the field in the autumn, which was a great help in removing the grass and nutrients to further support the meadow creation efforts. We are particularly pleased with the 'Call of the Wild' community art project. Thanks to the Parish Council for the £800 funding, for which we are very grateful, we were able to commission a local artist to work within the school to help create local wildlife inspired designs to be reproduced. This was supported by a couple of us taking in the moth trap to school to show the children some of the nightlife they may not be so familiar with. The subsequent design was painted on to the BT Openreach cabinet by the phone box and we have had positive feedback from a number of people in the village and it helps to encourage use of the phone box book swap, which is still being used by locals and visitors. In addition to practical actions, we have also been actively involved with other similar local groups and helping to develop networks. We have been supporting Chardstock and Churchingford Groups, which are both very active, have met with the Blagdon group and we presented the work of Wilder Buckland to over 120 people at an event organised by Somerset Wildlife Trust specifically to champion local environmental groups across the county.

In this coming year we are still considering what actions to undertake, we are always keen to hear the ideas of others so please get in touch if you have any. We will still be continuing with the meadow creation project and have a work party organised in the coming weeks to create some more bare ground patches to sow additional wildflower seed we have sourced locally. Thank you to Buckland St Mary Parish Council for the funding and the space to create the meadow. If the Parish Council or wider community have additional ideas about opportunities to support nature in our parish, whether that is through proposed developments, or resulting from the Unitary Authority looking to withdraw from local land management, or just ideas for events, the Wilder Buckland group would be pleased to support these – feel free to let us know.

23/6 To discuss any parish items that electors may wish to raise

A member of the public brought up about the number of Pot Holes on the roads. The Chair said the unfortunately it continues to be an ongoing problem but urged people to report issues via the Somerset Council Website.

The Chair thanked the people in attendance & there being no other business, the meeting closed at 1950.

K Every
Chair