

Coombe Bissett Parish Council

Mrs Jay McGowan, Clerk - parishclerkcoombebissett@gmail.com

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

Coombe Bissett Parish Councillors met for the **Annual Parish Meeting** on Tuesday 9th May 2023 at Coombe Bissett Village Hall starting at 6.30pm.

Present: Cllrs Des Hobson (Chair), Abigail Bird (Vice-Chair), Kim Byatt, Lennie Reed, Simon Boxall, Stephen Gledhill.

Also, present: Jay McGowan (Clerk), Cllr Richard Clewer and 7 members of the public.

Agenda

1. Welcome. Cllr Hobson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence. None.

3. Minutes of the last meeting.

Resolved: Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held Tuesday 10th May 2022 were approved by Councillors as a true record. Cllr Hobson signed the minutes.

4. Matters arising from those minutes. None.

5. Chairman's annual report – D Hobson.

A parish council is the 'neighbourhood' branch of local government. It plays a crucial but largely invisible role in our community. Apart from the paid Parish Clerk, all Parish Councillors are volunteers. We receive no payment for what we do.

Having a Parish Council is a legal requirement, and we charge a Parish Precept, which forms a tiny component of our Council Tax bills. If it were not for the army of volunteers helping run the villages the parish element of council tax would have to be much higher. The parish council is just one part of the network of volunteers making Homington and Coombe Bissett wonderful places to live in.

We use the precept to pay the Clerk's salary, grass cutting, maintenance of the recreation field and cemetery, and for making contributions towards highway improvements, such as 30mph roundels on the roads, and the new 'road narrows' signs in Homington.

Parish councillors raise highways maintenance issues with Wiltshire Council, such as jetting all the road drains in Homington Road, which stopped houses in Coombe Bissett from being flooded this winter and coordinating the drain repairs under the road outside the Old Vicarage and digging out the roadside ditches to stop runoff from flooding the villages. Parish councillors raise funds to purchase and maintain the play equipment in the recreation field, including

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annual safety inspections. The parish council purchased the Speed Indicator Device, to slow down speeding vehicles, and purchased the defibrillators in both villages. We purchased water pumps, which we use to reduce flooding, and have 'road closed' signs and barriers ready to use. We have part funded the new plaque for the war memorial, because cleaning the memorial itself is now ineffective.

Volunteer parish councillors review and comment on all the planning applications in the village. For example, commenting on the repeated applications for the Old Vicarage site. The parish council saw off the proposed urban jungle of six concrete houses at "Churchill Place" opposite the church.

Parish councillors and Christine Cooper have spent years so far preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. Jumping through all the hoops to get it over the line takes many hours each week. If passed at referendum it will mean we can take back control of development in our parish. A 'made' Neighbourhood Plan will mean that the community will choose where new houses go, not developers.

The Parish Council funded and helped organise the national events which took place over the last year: the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebration in the recreation field, condolence books following the Queen's death, the King's Coronation celebration at the Fox and Goose, support for Homington events, and the Coronation tulip tree planted on the Donkey Meadow.

Thank you to parish councillors, for all you do. In particular, I would like to thank Chris Chelu, who has just resigned after 13 years as a parish councillor, and who has done so much for our community. Thank you to Cllr Richard Clewer, who attends all our parish council meetings, at the end of a busy day as Leader of Wiltshire Council. And thank you to our Parish Clerk Jay McGowan. You are an incredible support to me as Chair.

6. Annual reports from representatives.

Councillor Bird:

Playground and Recreation Field

Ian Newman, the cricket club groundsman, is now paid an annual fee to maintain the hedges around the playpark, and keep the park weed free.

The annual RoSPA inspection noted some minor issues, such as paint deterioration and some minor repairs. There is nothing which affects the safety of equipment users, and the issues will be addressed when the weather improves.

The field was used for the 2022 Platinum Jubilee celebrations on 5th June 2022. This was extremely well attended by the whole community.

Parking

A group of representatives from the Village Hall, School, Cricket Club and Parish Council have met twice in the last 9 months to monitor and discuss the parking issues around the school and Village Hall. This has been very successful, with particular thanks to Tess Tidmarsh from the school, who

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communicates any problems to parents. There was a particularly rainy period which caused the field to become very wet and muddy, but thanks to good planning, this did not become a big issue. The Parish Council have purchased two sets of traffic cones and chains, for anyone hiring the Hall to use on the field, and these have already been put to good use at several recent events. The group will continue to meet on a 6 monthly basis to prevent problems arising.

Councillor Gledhill:

Homington Report.

Parish Councillors

Homington Residents Des Hobson, Stephen Gledhill and Simon Boxall have been Parish Councillors throughout the year. Des Hobson has also been Chair of the Parish Council.

Planning Applications

Three Planning Applications have been considered over the past year. None of the applications were particularly controversial and as a result it was not necessary for the Parish Council to ask our Wiltshire Councillor to 'call in' an application for consideration by the Southern Area Planning Committee. This was a relatively small number of applications, over the past 10 years five to nine has been a more usual figure.

Flooding

The risk from flooding in the village, particularly from run-off following heavy rain has continued to be monitored. The Parish Council has continued to work with Wiltshire Council to ensure minor works to improve drainage are completed. The Wiltshire Council Parish Steward has been effective in the clearance of a number of drainage grips around the village.

Roads and Traffic

The Parish Council working with the Wiltshire Council Southern Area Highways and Footway Improvement Group (LHFIG), arranged for additional road signage on the C12 through the village.

The Parish Speed Indicator Device (SID) has also been deployed in rotation on the C12. In addition, the Parish Community Speed Watch volunteer team has also conducted speed checks on the C12. Full details of the data collected by the SID are available on the village website. Analysis of the data suggest that the majority of drivers travel either below or close to the legal road speed limit. However unsurprisingly a small minority of drivers continue to break the speed limit.

Coombe Bissett CE VA Primary School Report

We are lucky to have our own village school in the Parish.

The School has a current roll of 113 pupils. The maximum number the School could teach is 119. Children are taught in four classes: Oak Class (Reception and Year 1); Elm Class (Year 1 and 2); Fir Class (Year 3 and 4); and Ash Class (Year 3 and 4).

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Following the resignation of the Head Teacher in August 2022, the School has been led by interim head teachers. It is expected that the Governors will appoint a new permanent Head Teacher, starting in September.

In addition, the School also has a very active support group called Friends of Coombe Bissett School, which amongst other things raises money to provide extra opportunities for the children.

Further information about the School is readily available on its website: <https://www.coombebissett.wilts.sch.uk/> and through the School Newsletters which are usually published weekly in term time and can be found on the School Website.

Councillor Chelu:

Village Hall

An asbestos survey was carried out this past year at the village hall and old flooring replaced with new. Some rewiring of the practical lights on stage has been made using the stage safer. Regular bookings from local organisations and private individuals, together with a number of weddings have enabled the village hall to remain financially viable.

The running of the hall depends upon the hard work of a number of volunteers on the management committee, and two paid cleaners, for which we thank them.

Highways & Street Scene

The challenging winter weather has wreaked havoc with a number of the roads in the parish causing a large number of potholes and surfaces to break up. We are told that Wiltshire Council has plans to resurface the C12, Stratford Tony Road up to C320 Race Plain Road, the A354 Rockbourne Road to 50mph limit, and carriageway repairs on the Homington Road through Coombe Bissett. An application to CATG was made for road narrows signs at the pinch point on the C12 Homington Road, within Homington. and this has now been installed.

Drainage work is planned to eliminate the large puddle which lies across the entrance to Willowmead Close which results in the Fox and Goose being showered with water. Drainage work has been carried out from Shutts Lane to The Old Vicarage to reduce water on the Homington Road. Further work in Shutts Lane is required to ensure that all water flowing down Shutts Lane is diverted into the new drainage system.

The Parish Council is informed of occasional road closures, and these are published on the village website. Adrian Turnbull has still been moving the speed indicator device around the parish on a regular basis and the data is available on the parish website. New rechargeable batteries were recently bought by the Parish Council to enable this continued monitoring of traffic speeds. We thank him for his continued enthusiasm for the SID and running Community Speed watch.

Snow Warden

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The snow experienced this year was again very short lived. The Parish still has ample supplies of salt ready for next winter and more can be requested although we may have to collect it ourselves. Advice to parishioners is on the website to help them prepare for any period of snowfall (or flooding).

Planning

During the last year there have been 28 planning applications in Coombe Bissett including a number of tree applications. The development in the chalk pit, which resulted in over 50 objections from local residents, has been withdrawn, much to the relief of neighbouring residents. The application for the Old Vicarage has also been withdrawn and it is shortly to be sold by auction.

Councillor Byatt:

Footpath Report

Over the last 12 months I have walked half of the footpaths within our parish. I also sent friends and family out, armed with maps, to walk the remaining paths from the map I was supplied with. No paths were reported as having faults beyond the occasional small bramble etc.

The only path I had trouble with was the footpath that runs from Homington Road to FP17 to Britford. (In the north east corner of the parish, north of the Ebble, connecting to the Britford path going east to Odstock.

At the time I walked it it was practically impassable, but within a couple of days it had been cut by Wiltshire Council.

(I have since been told that it is again verging on impassable, so will endeavour to investigate within the next week or so.

I was contacted by Mr Charles Penn, the footpath secretary for South Wilts Ramblers in regard to our PC supporting his application for a grant application to improve CBIS 14, which runs along the county boundary from Cranway Farm to CBIS 13. The PC agreed to support him in principle so as we have not heard from him since have assumed that his grant application was successful without our help.

I plan to walk all paths again over the next 12 month period.

7. Open Forum: No public questions.

8. To close the meeting.

The meeting was brought to a close by The Chairman at 6.50pm