

DRAFT Minutes of the Winsford Annual Assembly

Held on Wednesday 28 April 2021 at 7.00pm via Zoom

Present: Colin Wilkins (Chairman of the Parish Council), Nic Kemp (Clerk to the Parish Council) and 19 devices linking parishioners and guests, including parish councillors Kevin Connell, David Luscott, Mel Mileham and Patrick Watts-Mabbott

Colin Wilkins (CW), opened the meeting at 7.02pm and welcomed everyone. The Clerk advised the meeting was being recorded for information.

1. **Apologies** - Apologies were noted from David and Tamsin Godsall, and Jonathon Cox
2. **Minutes of the 2019 Winsford Annual Assembly** - CW advised that due to Covid there had been no Assembly in 2020. Mel Mileham proposed (Tracey Staples seconded) the minutes of the 2019 Assembly as a true record.
3. **Chairman's Report** - CW gave the following report:

Good evening.

For anybody who does not know me my name is Colin Wilkins and am honoured to be chairman of the parish council, I would like to welcome you to this Zoom meeting, which will be a report on the activities off the council over the last two years. (Due to covid restrictions there was no annual report presented last year). If you would like to ask a question, either you can you use the hand signal and Nic the clerk will record it or you can use the chat system. I will or other members of the council will answer all questions at the conclusion of this report, when we meet usually in the Village Hall for the annual assembly we have guest speakers, but the council took the view that we should concentrate on the last two years council business, lastly can I request that you mute your computer during the presentation so that background noise can be minimised.

Firstly I would like to take a moment to reflect on the following parishioners who have passed away in the last two years, Ann Le Bas, Adrian Hewlett and Mary White who lived at Edbrooke Cottages.

Thank you, I will talk later in my report on the contribution that Adrian and Miss Ann made to the village.

First I would like to thank my fellow councillors and clerk for their dedication, enthusiasm and help during the last two years when we all have had to adapt to Zoom meetings, they are Kevin Connell (Vice Chairman) who represents the council on various committees and analysis procedures. Mel Mileham who deals with flooding, drainage and issues on the moor and helps with the council archive. Johnny Bray who is very helpful with village history and various aspects of road problems. Sarah Little ensures the defibrillator is always working and completes monthly reports to the NHS. Patrick Watts-Mabbott who represents on social housing also with Sarah Little they are looking what the council could do for children in the parish.

David Luscott who joined the council in October 2019 has been responsible for setting up the council website and also represents the council on the recreation committee, and last but not least Nic Kemp the clerk to the council who ensures we follow all the set procedures, looks after the finances and offers advice when requested. As a council we also have help and advice from Francis Nicholson who is the Exmoor representative on Somerset County Council and Steven Pugsley who represents Exmoor on Somerset West and Taunton District Council who both attend every council meeting we have whether we are in the Village Hall or on Zoom, and we really do as a council thank them both for their help and everything they do for the council.

It was the intention of the council if the meeting had been held in the Village Hall, that reports were to be given by the chairperson of the Village Hall committee and the Recreation Association but due to covid lockdown both committees have been inactive, therefore there is very little to report. The two Trusts that the council are involved in usually report at the assembly but due to restrictions I will give a quick summary.

The George Joyce Trust is a trust that was set up by the gift of a farm which consisted of 140 acres and a house in the 17th century, the three councils that benefit are Cutcombe, Wootton Courtney, and Winsford, the Trust is administered by three representatives from each council with Richmond Harding as the chairman, the profit the Trust makes annually is distributed equally between the three councils and distributed to the most needy, there is a further committee of three parishioners in Winsford who with the help of the local Somerset Council Agent make the decision of who should receive a grant every year, the grant to each council is on average a £1000 per year. The Henry Leigh Trust is the second Trust that benefits the village, this Trust was set up with the sale of the old school at Withypool, as well as the Trust benefitting Winsford it also helps the parishioners of Withypool and Exford, The Trust meets three times a year and distributes educational grants to parishioners children who are under 25 years of age the grants can be used for example to purchase lap tops, swimming lessons, music lessons, and driving instruction. I am pleased to report that for the first time in four years Winsford parishioners have requested a grant and were successful. The council representative is Keith Lindop who will help any parishioners to complete the forms.

I will now move on to the council finances, as you are aware we increased the precept by 44% this large increase together with the 25% increase last year was to correct the financial problems that would have occurred in future years, to put this in perspective for 21/22 a D property In Cutcombe is £73.68, Exford £59.82, with Winsford at £39.48 with this increase, at the end of the present financial year the current account has just £10, with the council reserve at £2400, with new government regulations the reserve should be between 50% to 70% of total precept, the precept for this financial is £6500, so we need to increase the reserve by £1500 to £2000, as you are aware the council is not allowed by law to overdraw. During the last two financial years the main expenditure has been the councils new web site at £475 plus the annual £250 fee, the steam cleaning of the memorial and the seat. During this financial year work needs to take place on the

wooden bus shelter together with the parish noticeboard which is leaking, we have written to the Parks Authority asking if there are any grants available especially for the shared noticeboard, the wooden bench next to the bus shelter which was given to the village by Exmoor Rotary Club in 2008, has become rotten and is a health and safety risk, so it will be removed and repaired in the near future.

During the first year of covid the council was advised by the Somerset of Local Councils that we had to separate the Winsford Charity Trust from the council, this has now been actioned by the council, the way it works is that if you are a councillor, you automatically become a trustee of the Trust, Trust meetings are held after the council meetings, with their own agenda and minutes taken and separate financial accounts, if the Trust becomes short of funds it would be up to the council to support with additional funds, this should not happen as the Trust has reserves of £28000 and current account of £2700.

Talking about the Trust, during the last month the large Ash tree by the Memorial had to be felled due to Ash Dieback, at a cost of £850, the timber and the chippings were made available to parishioners who have made contributions towards the cost, which the Trust is very grateful for. The other expense during the last two years have been the wooden swings, as you are probably aware the swings have to be inspected every year, during last year's inspection one of the stays was reported as being rotten which has resulted in only two swings being in operation, this year's inspection confirmed that the two remaining swings are safe, during the last meeting councillors Patrick Watts-Mabbott and Sarah Little (who both have young children) undertook to look at what children's equipment the Trust could provide in the future and report back to the Trust. During the next two years the five picnic benches will probably have to be replaced as they are becoming rotten and unsafe also the waste bin has seen better days. In conclusion on the green I would like to thank Mel and Dave Mileham and there many helpers who keep the flowers, hedges and verges tidy throughout the last two years.

Before I talk to you about the various council responsibilities, it would be amiss of me not to mention the Winsford Support Group which was launched at the first lock down to help parishioners who were self isolating or needed assistance, there help was really appreciated, since the original lockdown parishioners have continued to help various residents who require help. I will now inform you of other aspects that the council is responsible for.

The Defibrillator continues to be monitored monthly with the report being sent to the local NHS, the pads have been replaced during the year due to the expire date, before covid the council were looking to review and if necessary train new responders, this will be reviewed when we get back to sort of normal. on behave of the council and the parishioners I would like to thank Sarah Little for ensuring that the defibrillator is maintained and meets all statutory regulations.

Highways. During the last two years, SCC Highways introduced a new system to report pot holes and all other aspects of road damage, this system has been a great improvement of getting damaged roads repaired within two weeks of being reported. During last year the gritting program reverted

back to its original plan of 2018, which was gritting Ash Lane to Withypool, all the nine salt bins were refilled together with a spade in each one, one of the bins on Furze Hill was damaged and replaced, a new bin was purchased by The Royal Oak to help with gritting up Halse Lane which the council are most grateful. Major tree work was carried out for two weeks along the Exford Road to clear dead Ash Trees which were a health and safety issue to road travellers. Highways and farm agencies have been looking at the drainage problems that exist on Furzhill Lane, the drains and ditches have been cleaned on occasions but due to the amount of water running down the road, a plan has to be devised and actioned during the forthcoming year. Wessex Water. During the last eighteen months there has been eleven bursts on The Stepp, which has resulted after pressure from the residents backed by the council, that a new main from Ash Lane to Exford Road will be installed during June and July taking up to four weeks to complete, this does mean there will be disruption but Wessex Water have confirmed it will be kept to a minimum.

Planning Matters. During the last two years as a council we have discussed and made various decisions on over ten plans without controversy, the one plan that is still outstanding is the mast at the top of Halse Lane which has been deferred by the Parks planners, this has led to an appeal by The Home Office with EE which is being held in mid May in Bristol. The council would always recommend that if any parishioners are thinking of doing any alteration work on their property to always talk to the park planners first to get their views. During the last two years the three houses at Royal Oak Court have been finished and occupied, the council wish the new occupants a happy and long stay in our village this also applies to all other people who have moved to the village over the last two years, the old barns next to Royal Oak Court have been renovated which are a credit to their owners, on the negative side the bungalow in Ash Lane continues to be a "a blight on the landscape" nothing has happened during covid, but the council will ensure you that we will revisit the problem with the help of Steven Pugsley our district councillor.

South West Water have confirmed that the sewage pumping station near Pitcott House has adequate room, after concern was expressed by the council with the building of the extra houses at Royal Oak Court and the conversion of the Old Village Hall to a bunk house, plus the planning permission for the building of a new dwelling at the top of Ash Lane.

Ash Trees. During the last two years the village has lost three Ash trees due to dieback on Somerset County Council ground, one opposite the Royal Oak and two on the car park, with another Ash marked for felling on the car park. Last year the council took up the offer of eight assorted saplings given by Somerset West and Taunton District Council which will be planted around the village.

Last but not least the council have purchased a wreath from the British Legion over the last two years to show respect from all parishioners on Remembrance Day at the Memorial.

Website. One of the major projects had to address during the last two years was the need to reinstate a new council website to conform with government regulations, as the old website had not been updated with over

50 updates outstanding with the person responsible leaving the area. The council after consideration decided that a local resident who volunteered to update the website and would conform with government regulations, when the new website was presented to the council it had a comment section which was connected to social media also the editorial content was not to be controlled by the council, after the discussion the council decided it could not agree to these conditions after taking advice from Somerset Association of Local Councils, therefore the council decided to pursue its own website were it had complete control, the council then purchased a site who specialised in council websites therefore all government regulations are automatically updated.

During this time the council were offered its own website back at a price plus no editorial control, once again the council rejected this solution. The council accept that one website for the village is ideal, but it has to be that the council has editorial control either by the clerk or a member of the council and that all government legislation is updated. There has been a lot of comment with regard to a discussion the council made with the chairman having the casting vote with regard to third party websites being published on the website, the reason behind the decision is that the council website is for information only, therefore we will only publish government and local government websites because as a council we cannot be accused of favouring any third party website. The council would point that since the beginning of February this year a daily blog has been posted every morning, and the website will continue to be updated with events and information every day.

At the beginning of this report we had a moment's pause to remember parishioners who have passed away in the last couple of years, it would be amiss of the council not to recognise the contribution Adrian Hewlett and Ann Le Bas gave to the village. Adrian lived at The Folly near Winsford Hill he was a regular worshipper at St Mary's Magdalene and served on the PCC, Adrian was a major part of the organisation of the service of Remembrance at the memorial, and took a major part of the service. Miss Ann (as she was known) who lived in the village for over 80 years, during her long life she was a major benefactor to the village, from giving the recreation field (cricket ground) the land for the tennis courts and supplying houses for affordable living, she was also a regular at St Mary's Magdalene always sitting in the same pew, and Miss Ann's home made jam with fruit from her garden was a highlight of the annual village fete. During her life she was a very accomplished artist,

and showed at various exhibitions she, on her death she left the village over 60 prints which the council are having valued and sell at a discount to parishioners, before we sell to consumers from surrounding villages. Miss Ann also left the remainder of the field with the tennis courts into the village, which she has requested should be for recreational purposes, the council will draw up plans and apply for grants when all the legal work has been finalised. It is the councils view that the life of Miss Ann should be recognised and will be coming forward with ideas in the near future.

In conclusion I would like once again thank my fellow councillors for all their hard work and contribution they have made during the last two years, I also

include Nic our clerk and of course Francis and Steven our county and district councillors, and of course all of you for taking time to listen to this report.

I will now answer any questions that have been submitted to Nic either before the report or during the Zoom meeting.

4. Public Forum - The following queries were raised:

A parishioner requested to reserve one of Ann le Bas' prints.

A parishioner asked does the Assembly agree that the parish should pay the running costs of both the parish council and the village community websites?

There was much discussion including the level of voluntary input of residents, the option for businesses to contribute, whether the parishioners, or the Parish Council, would have any control over content, whether there was need for a community website and could social media be used more. Parishioners commented the community website contained useful information and considered whether a better deal could be available for the hosting. Parishioners thanked the moderator of the community website for producing it, and thanked Councillors for their efforts.

With no further questions, CW thanks all for attending and closed the meeting at 8.10pm.