

MONKSILVER PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Quarterly Parish Council Meeting held at 7:30 pm on Monday, 22nd August 2022 at the EMN Hall.

Present: Cllrs. Mervyn Orchard-Lisle (chair), Andrew Howe (vice-chair), Sue Westbury, Dan Cotterill, John Stace, County Cllr. Christine Lawrence and Carol Juffs, Clerk.

Apologies: Cllrs. Kate Adams, Tina Coggan

Absent: County Cllrs. Marcus Kravis, Stephen Griffiths

Parishioners: Zoë Freeman, Stuart and Wendy Tudor-Jackman, Viv Booth, Ged Goldsmith and David Vere Hodge

Residents Open Forum

Flooding issues in Monksilver during the storm Tuesday 16th August

Background:

After weeks of hot and dry weather up to Sunday 14th August, the weather broke with a severe storm during the night of Tuesday 16th August. It had been the driest July since 1935 and the ground was too hard to absorb the rain as it fell, meaning that it ran off the fields contributing to the flash flooding. To add to the circumstances, some of the fields within the village had been harvested, resulting from which hay had been left along the sides of the roads.

An added complication was that this storm had occurred during the summer months, without any weather warnings. Andrew Howe reported that 111mm (just under 4½") of water had fallen in the 24-hour period, with 60mm (just under 2½") falling between 10 pm and 11 pm. The deluge of storm water and debris caused serious flooding issues throughout the village.

The buildings affected:

Wisteria Cottage, Fore Street. This was the only dwelling where floods penetrated into the ground floor. This went up to a height of about 600mm (2'-0"). Most of the water was either coming down Beech Tree Hill and along Fore Street, or down Combe Cross Hill, past the Grange and thence into Back Way.

The two garages between Merivale and Herons in High Street.

The stables at The Granary in Birchanger Lane.

The gardens and outside areas affected:

The garden of Wisteria Cottage

The garden of Herons

The yard at The Granary

The yard at Criddles Farm

Near misses (water lapping up to a frightening level relative to the ground floor of two houses:

The Granary

Meadowsweet in High Street

Comments by the parishioners:

- It is gratefully acknowledged that in recent years, SCC had funded major improvements to the drainage in Monksilver, both relating to Beech Tree Hill and in High Street. Without those works, the problems might have been much worse.
- Nevertheless, the problem was exacerbated by poor maintenance by ENP and Somerset Council, as the water was unable to drain immediately. This was in spite of SCC having cleared many of the drains in the last two months. The drains had been blocked by general debris, plus an unusually early leaf-drop and straw. The debris was generally gravel, earth, twigs and leaves within the village, but also a lot of mud on Birchanger Lane.
- Clearing the mud out of the gullies and drains has obvious huge benefits, but then rendered ineffective if the mud is left on the roadway, only to be washed into the gully when it rains.
- Residents cleared the sluice at the bottom of Birds Hill, just in time to stop water penetrating into Meadowsweet and possibly other houses in High Street.
- Residents had also unblocked the lower drains on Beech Tree Hill. The drain run between the second lowest gully and the lowest gully was clearly blocked, since water was bubbling up at the second lowest gully.
- Viv Booth reported that George from SCC had agreed that the Council would make some alterations to the grating in the Granary yard so that she could lift it to clear it when floods were imminent. Although this had been delayed at the time to the following financial year, nothing had happened since and this was several financial years back. This grating is over a drain run which carries water from the road under Viv's land to a tributary of the Monksilver stream.
- Viv Booth also reported that the pond created opposite her entrance at the instigation of Carina Gaertner was the cause of some concern because the invert level was somewhat higher than the roadway. Water oozes out of it through the bank, and if the bank was to fail then a potential disaster was waiting to happen.
- Various discussions took place with theories of how Wisteria Cottage could have additional flood defences for the future. This needs to be a later discussion with Bryony Gray.

The Chairman summarized that the action points were:

1. To establish exactly what and where the problems are.
2. To establish proper regular maintenance by the County Council which includes not only keeping drains clear, but also repairing the masonry around the sluice at the bottom of Birds' Hill (action agreed recently by Becky Pearson). To clear regularly the roadside debris of gravel and mud which compound the issue. Much of the mud comes from eroded banks at the roadsides, where the road edges need clearing and sharpening up.
3. To discuss with SCC whether the gullies would benefit from vertical paving slabs, as exist on Nettlecombe Park Road, to direct the water into the gullies without eroding the banks.

4. To invite Catherine Tyson from the Highways Department to walk around the village with Christine Lawrence, Kevin Bridgewater and a few of Parish representatives to explain the problems highlighting the risk areas.
5. To review the village Flood Plan following this recent flooding. In exceptional circumstances where reasonable flood precautions will not solve the flooding problem, the residents must be alert to self-help (as happened on this occasion). Therefore a telephone tree needs to be created that is effective for the four areas of the village (being mindful of GDPR issues). The best course of action will still be for all the responding residents coming out to help neighbours. Areas covered are as follows:
 - Area 1 – Andrew Howe
 - Area 2 – John Notley
 - Area 3 – Martyn Westbury
 - Area 4 – Kevin WalkerThe revised Flood Plan will then be uploaded onto the website.

In the meantime Somerset's emergency line is open 24/7. This is 0300 304 8000.

Subsequent to the meeting, Christine Lawrence suggested that it might be possible for a lengthsman to be employed, shared between a number of parishes. Such an appointment would hopefully be funded from the Local Community Network which itself is funded from SCC.

1. As there were a number of parishioners present, all concerned about the flooding that had taken place in the village following the storm in the evening of the 16th August, it was decided to bring this forward to be the first item for discussion. This discussion is reported above.

Zoë suggested that a future meeting might consider Subsidence.

2. **The Minutes** of the Quarterly Meeting held on May 16th 2022 were approved.
 - 2.1 The date of the next Annual meeting should read May 15th 2023 on page 4
3. **Declarations of interest:** none declared
4. **Matters arising:**
 - Jubilee Picnic** was a very successful event
 - Defibrillator** - the defibrillator is checked twice a week, with each person taking on the duty for two months per year.
5. **Somerset and West Somerset & Taunton Councillors' reports**

Cllr Lawrence reported that the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset is still in progress with vesting day 1st April 2023. However, the Local Community Networks remain unresolved as to how many and where the boundaries are, and details of their constitution and responsibilities **are** yet to be announced.

A Council Tax consultation on financial support has been launched and runs until 19th September. Cllr Lawrence urged anyone wanting to get involved to go to the following link for further information

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SomersetCTRLIVE/

Somerset Trading standards working closely with Devon Trading Standards have seized illegal tobacco in raids across the two counties totalling more than £200k. The recent operations means that for 2021/2 the total seized is more than £310k.

Somerset County Council and the NHS Somerset have launched a new Community Equipment and Wheelchair service to help people live more independently. If anyone knows of anyone needing help more information can be found at

www.somerset.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/equipment-to-help-you/

Somerset Business Climate Summit 2022 takes place at Queen's College, Taunton on Wednesday 21st September between 10.00 and 1.00pm if anyone from the village is interested to attend. Details can be found at

www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/climate-emergency-businesses/climate-summit/

In the current financial situation, fuel crisis support is available through the local Village Agent Izzy Sylvester. If anyone knows of anyone requiring help please contact Izzy Sylvester on 07931018045 to advise her and she will follow this up.

Cllr Stace raised the issue that with the planned increase in building homes in the Williton and Watchet areas over the next few years, there is not the infrastructure in place to support this housing development. The roads will have to support the extra traffic which affects Monksilver for anyone trying to get south to Taunton and Wiveliscombe areas. The Planning issues were a matter for the District Council – Somerset West and Taunton, and approval has been given, despite the impact on roadways and drainage/flooding, and schooling, doctors etc.

The Chairman raised the issue at Wayside, of the removal of trees and vegetation along the stretch of river running through the centre of Monksilver, which now exposes the buildings behind. While there is no objection to the proposed development of the buildings there was no landscaping relating to the proposed development. The applicant's architect had responded that the planning application was not dealing with the river bank side of the site. This has been referred to Exmoor National Parks Timothy Fumidge for clarification, but as Cllr Lawrence is on the ENP Committee she was unable to comment, although she will enquire whether it is going to Committee or not.

6. Website: Introduction from Black Cat Computers, David Sykes

Following the short presentation provided for the last meeting, files were transferred from Edward Martin Computers. However, this caused the original site to crash and

David Sykes has been working with David Vere Hodge to transfer across the essential items to the proposed new website.

David Vere Hodge offered the Parish Council the domain name **Monksilver.org**. It was proposed by Sue Westbury to adopt the new website and seconded by Andrew Howe. David was thanked for his generosity in gifting the domain name to the Parish Council and for all he had done in setting up the system so far.

Initially, it was hoped to have a local administrator for uploading direct to the website, but because of file protocols and background links required, all work will be routed to Black Cat Computers via the Clerk.

The estimate of £840 p.a received in May will cover the on-going work to complete the website and any ad hoc uploading of documents required during the year, until the ceiling of £840 is reached. Black Cat would provide regular invoices, in order to keep track of the work completed.

It was agreed to adopt a system of archives so that only the current year's documents and papers were immediately available with options to use the search engine for archived files of recent years.

John Stace proposed that we continued with the development of the website by Black Cat Computers, as set out at the meeting, and this was seconded by Sue Westbury.

7. **Planning Application:**

7.1 The Notley Arms: Noisy Extract Fan – matters are on-going with no update to report yet. **M O-L**

7.2 Wayside – as discussed above with Cllr Lawrence

8. **Flooding Issues and Updates**

It was reported that the proposed installation of the telemetry device is moving very slowly. The following communication was received from Emma Giffard at the Somerset Rivers Authority last week: **KA**

"I am going to be on leave for two weeks until 23rd August - Gareth from the EA hasn't been in touch yet with regard to the telemetry – we were just exploring options with Roadwater as they had some concerns that needed to be addressed before they could decide whether the EA option for delivering the telemetry were right for them. Happily, I think we're almost there with getting this out the door and Gareth should be in touch soon. We are also drawing up a community agreement which sets out the expectations and limitations.

"I will pick this up on my return – I'm sorry this has taken so long but I think there is huge added value and benefits to having the EA involved with the community system. The technology moves on so quickly that what was best for us a year ago is different from what is available now!"

9. Highways Report

JS

Cllr John Stace contacted Becky Pearson in the Highways department at Somerset Council and met on 30th June in Monksilver to discuss his duties and liaison with the Council over matters including maintenance, replacement and servicing of roads, signage, processes to report pot-holes, road drainage, and cleaning of roads. The Chairman joined the meeting and they walked through the village noting blocked drains and pot holes, marked with spray paint. But by no means was everything noted in the time available.

The speed of traffic through the village was discussed, including the potential for traffic calming and for reducing the speed limit to 20mph.

Becky Pearson will be talking to Catherine Tyson about the issues raised and reporting back.

Correspondence from a resident Nick Prettejohn was received before the meeting highlighting all the traffic concerns as discussed, and expressing his concern for elderly pedestrians, children and dogs in the village with passing traffic. His observations are that the build up of traffic has increased steadily over his 17 years of residency, and will worsen with the proposed local housing developments.

Essential lorry deliveries to local farms may not cope readily with road restrictions. The roadways in Monksilver are narrow and will not even support the addition of central white lines to guide traffic through the narrow bends.

It is clear there is a problem with the size of some vehicles, and the general speed of vehicles. Extending the 30 mph limit to beyond Inglewood would help. Adopting flashing signs that record the speed a vehicle is travelling, to make the driver more aware in the speed limit, might be a solution.

It was agreed to wait to hear from Somerset Council who are the experts in road safety, as to what they would suggest as solutions for Monksilver village.

The verge-side hedges on the left at Fair Cross need trimming back at the junction where yet another accident happened recently. It needs to be trimmed back by the Council to improve visibility.

10. Pathways and Deer Management Group:

DC

There had been no concerns raised over local pathways recently.

11. Neighbourhood Watch:

There have been reports of motorbikes in the EMN Hall car park, late at night, which has been reported to the Police. There have been no further updates.

The Neighbourhood Watch post has fallen down below Orchard House.

12. Finance.

- a. The Clerk has received acknowledgement from the External Auditors PKF LittleJohn that Monksilver Parish Council is exempt from external Audit.
- b. The financial statement of account and Bank reconciliation to July 15th statement number 178 was circulated to all Councillors ahead of the meeting. The current Bank balance is £5661.27 with all cheques presented.
- c. There were three cheque payments to be approved and these were signed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, for two quarterly salary payments to the Clerk and stationery & postage expenses. It was noted that the salary payments are for the gross salary and the Tax is paid by E C Juffs, Clerk direct to HMRC. The receipt for this transaction was countersigned by the Chairman. A contract of Employment needs to be drawn up stating that salary payments will be paid gross to the Clerk and Financial Officer, **with** the responsibility for payment of tax to be made by her direct to HMRC.
- d. Monksilver Parish Council is now registered as an Employer with HMRC and the PAYE reference is **120/BE47569**. Monksilver Parish Council is now enrolled with the Pensions Regulator and enrolment duties began on June 6th 2022, the date of employment* of member of staff, for completion by 7th November 2022. This was completed on-line on 4th August to be fully compliant, with the Chairman stated as the most senior person. *this date could not be earlier in the tax year until the enrolment as an Employer was complete with HMRC. The Clerk is to be paid quarterly for 13 weeks at £10.42 per hour equating to £1083.68 per annum. This is NALC Level SCP 6 and matches Nettlecombe PC, where the Clerk is also employed.
- e. The change of address for statements and cheque book issues is nearly correct at Natwest. The addressee still needs to be changed, but matters are with Natwest. Due to the excessive time wasted on this matter, including trips to the bank in Minehead, Natwest have offered compensation of £150 which was received on July 15th.
- f. Due to the protracted problems with address changes it was decided to wait before considering the need for on-line banking. Potential payments to HMRC initially triggered the enquiry, but as these are now paid by personal debit card, there is no current need for on-line banking.

13. Training Courses available for Councillors

Details of training courses available through SALC had been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting.

14. Area Panel Meetings

There is currently no news of the reinstatement of Dunster Area Panel Meetings which is a vital networking forum for the wider community.

15. Village Defibrillator Update

KA

There is nothing to report, other than six residents now check the device on a regular twice-weekly basis, and it is well housed in the pub's laundry room.

A fund-raising event (Wreath making) is to be held on 4th December 2022'

16. Matters outside Monksilver

There were no other matters to note.

17. Any Other Business

Fallen telephone lines: Ian Bird from Open Reach Health and Safety dept, reported that the work on the telephone lines will be carried out within the next six months. He has noted the work needs to be carried out before the winter. The priority with the asset assurance department is the installation of Fibre, but this pole has been in danger of collapse for the last 3 or 4 years, and needs removing as a matter of urgency.

18. Dates of Next four meetings

ALL

5th December 2022

27th February 2023

15th May 2023

14th August 2023

The Meeting closed at 10.17 pm.