

MONKTON COMBE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Monkton Combe Parish
held at 7:30 p.m. on 18th May 2021 in the Village Hall & Online

Present (in person): Mr. Des Wighton (Chairman), Cllr. Lyn Alvis, Cllr. James Bradby, Cllr. Gavin Douglas, Mr. Geoff Davis - Clerk and Mr. Ray Franks

Present (online): Cllr. Adelle Brenner, Cllr. Andreea Imecs, Cllr. Mike Wareham, Ward Cllr. Matt McCabe

1. Apologies for absence: None

2. Chairman's Report. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He then summarised the Annual Report, which has been distributed to households within the Parish via the Parish Newsletter, highlighting the main points. The report is available as a separate document.

3a. Monkton Combe School: Cllr. Adelle Brenner and Cllr. Des Wighton met with the Bursar and summarised the points as follows:-

Covid-19 – like other educational establishments the School had tailored its operations in line with the guidelines and teaching had operated on a 'virtual' basis for a large part of 2020. During relaxation of the lockdowns, when pupils had returned to the School, it had adopted a 'zone' system for monitoring and control of any outbreak which had proved very successful and, despite a few isolated cases, had managed to avoid significant numbers of pupils having to quarantine for any length of time. The School was looking forward to a return to normal operations as soon as possible.

Building Developments – Senior School

Proposed developments of the school infrastructure had similarly been affected by the pandemic but several notable works had been undertaken, in some cases, taking advantage of the fact that no pupils were on site.

The astro-turf on the Hockey Pitch was replaced in June and the project included installation of the dug-outs on the south side.

Work on School House to convert part of it into house parent accommodation was completed, including works to the external stone work and the removal of redundant cabling on the outside of the building to improve the appearance of the house in its environment.

Developments in the wider village included the sale of Tabora on Shaft Road and a couple of houses in The Croft. A plot in The Croft, scheduled for new build, had been converted into extra parking places for locally based staff and relieved the pressure on parking space for all residents.

Crossing by Grange House – works were completed to provide a safer environment for pupils (and anyone else) to cross Church Lane by the Chapel without going as far as installing a zebra crossing or lights.

In the current year, work was now scheduled to start on Farm House at half term (end of May) and be completed by August.

Work on the re-landscaping of the Quads had commenced and a large soak-away had been dug to accommodate drainage from both sites to preserve the health of nearby trees.

The Inner Quad would be completed by June but work on the Chapel Quad would not now start until next year.

End of Term – the School gave a 'heads up' regarding end of term activities which might affect the wider village – a helicopter was due to land on Four Acres sometime on 23rd June, the 24th would feature musical performance and the 25th Sports day. The end of term Ball on the 26th would be held up at the main school instead of down on Longmead this year and would include 'dodgem cars' and probably a relatively high level of extraneous noise which the School hoped residents would recognise and tolerate as an infrequent occurrence.

Summer Activity – The usual summer residential bookings had largely disappeared due to the pandemic and uncertainty about the rules regarding gatherings of people. There were a few reservations but not until August.

3b. St Michael's and All Angels Church. Cllr. James Bradby addressed the meeting and highlighted that the Church was closed from the end of March 2020, opening again in September but closing in December and now reopened from April 2021. The Carol Service was cancelled and replaced with an open-air Christmas Party. There have been one or two burials of ashes. He reported that Roger Croker had been seriously ill for many weeks during the year, and that residents David LeTal & Ian Bygraves with others had maintained the Churchyard in good shape, and much thanks is due to them all. It is believed that Roger Croker is now recovered.

3c. Village Hall Committee: Cllr. Des Wighton, as chair of the Village Hall Management Committee reported as follows:-

Well, what a year that was....

Just as we got started the whole world, even Monkton Combe, ground to a halt and our booking schedule went out of the window.

It all started so well, our annual Burns Night in January, when Covid was little understood and seemed a very long way away, attracted a full house of 56 people who were regaled by Alastair, resplendent as ever, with the Bard of Scotland's tribute to the haggis. The WI, led by Stella Alford, provided plenty of the traditional fare, a raffle was run and a round of 'Irish Bingo' generated extra funds so that the whole evening made a healthy surplus.

Then, of course, in March came the first lockdown and all bookings had to stop.

Fortunately the Government, with unexpected generosity, came up with the Business Support Grants Scheme which included venues like the Village Hall that had a rateable value.

The long period of enforced closure did, however, give us the opportunity to do some maintenance without having to worry about the disruption this would normally cause to our hiring schedule.

The big project was the replacement of the water main which had given us so much grief by leaking under the kitchen. This was accomplished in the summer, routing it along the edge of the car park and the taps were turned on by October.

Of no less importance was the replacement of a section of new flooring in the hall after water damage from a central heating leak, Fortunately this was covered by our insurance once again but would have caused considerable disruption in a normal year.

In August the toilet block was refurbished with new flooring and repainting and the committee room benefitted from the installation of plasterboard lining and repainting.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our secretary Mike for organising the claiming of the grants, the managing of the contractors themselves and indeed, pitching in with some of the work done.

And so we face 2021 with uncertainty. 'Normal' life should be returning by the summer but whether or not that will allow a Grand Village Barbecue to celebrate will depend on how events unfold in the meantime.

At least, we can look back on 2020 as a year when some major maintenance was achieved even if there have been few clients to get the benefit. The building will always need some repair or upgrade, of course, but, as I said last year, it falls to the committee not only to maintain the structure but to enhance its efficiency and reduce its carbon footprint as much as possible – this is the target we aspire to in our centenary year 2028, not only a bright and welcoming building but one that doesn't negatively impact its environment too.

Thanks, as ever, should go to my fellow officers, Mike and Martyn for their dedication in keeping the Hall functioning and profitable but also to all committee members, and David in particular, for their continued work on making it a safe and comfortable environment for the lettings and to ensure its future for the benefit of the whole community.

4d. Women's Institute. As the WI now meet at Claverton they did not provide a report.

5. Other matters highlighted or discussed:-

Ray Franks thanked the Parish Council for continuing to function and look after the Village throughout the previous difficult year.

The meeting closed at 8:08 p.m.