

MONKTON COMBE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Monkton Combe Parish
held at 7:30 p.m. on 12th May 2022 in the Village Hall

Present: Mr. Des Wighton (Chairman), Cllr. Lyn Alvis, Cllr. Mike Wareham, Mr. Geoff Davis – Clerk, Mr. Ray Franks, Nicole Oliver, David LeTall, Diana LeTall, Ryan Baully, Becki McKinlay (School)
Present (online): Cllr. Andreea Imecs

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Cllr. James Bradby, Cllr. Adelle Brenner, Ward Cllr. Matt McCabe, Ward Cllr. Neil Butters, Angela Grundy, Charles Carr
- 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:** Becki McKinlay Director of External Relations – Monkton Combe School, addressed the meeting as follows:-
Pupil numbers at the school have now returned to almost pre-pandemic levels with 390 Seniors and 300 Prep. The School wants to remain a 'small' school and has no plans to grow.
Work will continue on the 'FarmHouse' but this should have minimal impact on neighbours. The Quads will also continue to be refurbished and will cease use as a Car Park. There will be an Annual celebration week-end at at Longmead. The School is looking for opportunities to invite the community back into School events. Following a suggestion at the meeting we will look at community use of the Observatory.
- 3b. St Michael's and All Angels Church.** The Electoral Roll stands at 32. The church was closed for the first three months of the year during lockdown, and reopened on Easter Sunday. Since then services have been held each Sunday morning at 11.00 am. Average attendance was between 20 and 22 with larger congregations at Christmas and Easter and Remembrance Day. The Covid-19 pandemic has restricted special services and events, and the Christmas Eve Carol service had to be cancelled, to be replaced with a social gathering in the churchyard. The church has been used for two Craft days open to people village as well as the congregation. A home group has met regularly in members' homes since September. There were four meetings of the PCC as well as the APCM in April. Financial support was given to three missionaries, one of whom came to address the Sunday service. There were two weddings in the church in 2021. There were no funerals, and a number of Burials of Ashes in the churchyard, which also serves Combe Down Parish. The church had to remain locked while the pandemic was at its worst, but it is now unlocked and open to visitors about 70 hours per week.
- 3c. Village Hall Committee:** Cllr. Des Wighton, as chair of the Village Hall Management Committee reported as follows:-
After the virtual closure of the hall in 2020 due to the pandemic, things slowly started getting back into gear during 2021. As lockdowns went, and lockdowns came back again, several groups tried to resume their activities, even if this meant meeting outside (the choir) or introducing extra hygiene measures to ensure their and other user's safety. We are grateful to all our hirers for their continued support of course and also to the Government for their grants to compensate for lost earnings over the period.
As the secretary noted in his report, car parking for attendees of events or classes in the hall is becoming so difficult that potential hirers are put off before they even look inside the hall. The car park next to the hall is full at most times of the day from local residents who are working from home or possess multiple cars, or both. Unfortunately there is no easy solution to the problem.
Events were also curtailed in 2021. The annual Burns Night was cancelled because of lockdown restrictions but we had hopes for a summer picnic. Unfortunately the other big story of the decade, stormy weather, resulted in our having to cancel at the last minute due to a most inclement forecast – which turned out to be largely true.
The installation of the audio-visual system proved instrumental in being able to schedule a lecture by the school historian on the founder of the school, the Revd Pocock, with a slide show on the big screen. This was remarkably well attended – by villagers as well as pupils old and young. It's also proved useful for presentation of documents or pictures at group meetings such as the Parish Council and the Valley Parishes Alliance.
Given our relatively comfortable financial position, but bearing in mind what I said previously about falling demand for bookings, we are looking to the new year to do more maintenance to improve facilities at the hall which will contribute towards reducing our energy consumption to save us money in the long term and the help the environment in the even longer.

And so we look forward to another year with confidence. All our committee members have survived the last two years and, I hope, are looking forward to helping manage this great village asset for many more.

Thanks, as ever, should go to my fellow officers, Mike Newton and Martyn Tranter for their dedication in keeping the Hall functioning and profitable but also to all committee members, and David LeTall 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. Monkton Combe WI is still thriving and meeting monthly at Claverton Down Community Hall once a month on the second Thursday evening. We have managed to retain most of our members despite being unable to meet during Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. Increasingly our membership is not from Monkton Combe itself, but from Combe Down and Claverton, and sadly mostly the older members of the community. We do not seem to attract younger women in to the organisation despite an interesting and varied programme of events.

Since June 2021, we have held a Garden Meeting to enjoy the long summer evening, a Soiree with musical entertainment from the Corylus Consort, run a jams, cakes, chutneys and second hand book stall at Claverton Down Horticultural show and performed an alternative version of the pantomime "Cinderella" involving dating apps and aid to the third world! Other monthly activities have included talks from Julian House, and most recently a French evening where we were entertained by stunningly good local musicians on the English pipes, fiddle and hurdy-gurdy and learned to dance. Oh, and not to forget the amazing Burns Supper which was so much enjoyed again this year.

We run a monthly book club, film club, and craft club and we have an occasional walking group....the fair weather kind!

We are very keen to hold on to our ties with Monkton Combe and hope we can continue to work together to support the local community. We miss meeting at the Village Hall; it remains our real "home" and we would move back readily if the parking situation was easier.

5. Other matters highlighted or discussed:-

The following matters were raised and the Parish Council will continue to progress these in the following year:-

The use of the Car park particularly as the W.I. had ceased to use the Village Hall because of lack of availability of spaces.

The issue of where the Bus is turning, and this will continue to be pursued with WECA, B&NES and the Contractor.

The Double Yellow Lines at the School, as the TRO should have been implemented last financial year.

The Handrail on the Drung. A contractor is being sought currently.

Ray Franks thanked the Parish Council for their continuing efforts looking after the Village throughout the previous difficult year.

The meeting closed at 8:33 p.m.