

Monkton Combe Parish Council Newsletter

Annual Report 2023-2024

(This document and a comprehensive range of Monkton Combe Parish Council documents can be found on our website:- monktoncombepc.org)

There were Parish Council elections this year and Councillors Lyn Alvis, James Bradby, Adelle Brenner, Charlie Carr, Penny Tranter, Mike Wareham, and Des Wighton were duly elected councillors for the Parish of Monkton Combe without contest, on Tuesday 4th April 2023.

Parish Councillors and their individual responsibilities (to be reviewed and agreed at the Annual Parish Council meeting on 15th May).

Lyn Alvis	Neighbourhood Watch, Bath Preservation Trust Representative, B&NES Parishes liaison, Village Bus Service; Village Sweeper Truck
James Bradby	Church liaison, Village Signs – footpaths, roads etc., Footpaths and Bridleways Rights of Access and Stiles, and Hedgerows and Verges, Planning
Adelle Brenner	Road Safety, Public Seating and benches, and School Liaison
Penny Tranter	Footpaths and Bridleways, Rights of Access and Stiles, and Hedgerows and Verges
Charles Carr	Road Safety, Roads and Highways
Mike Wareham	Vice Chairman Gullies and Drainage, Bus Shelter, Planning, ALCA Representative
Des Wighton - Chairman	Planning Applications, policy and consultation, Parish Plan, Village Hall liaison, Village Hall Car Park and Garden, Village Playground – health safety and maintenance, Village Lock-up, Mill Lane Phone Box
Geoff Davis – Clerk	Responsible Financial Officer, Parish Notice Boards and Communication

Meetings

The Parish Council met on 6 occasions during the period 2023-2024 which were 6 meetings of the Full Council. The meeting on the 15th May 2023 was the Annual Parish Council Meeting. All meetings were held in the Village Hall, fully open to the public to attend.

The Annual Parish Meeting or Meeting of Electors took place on 18th April 2023 in the Village Hall. Councillors also attended occasional other meetings with other Parish Councils and B&NES at joint forums and with related organisations such as The Bath Preservation Trust.

Planning

During the year we have considered a number of different planning applications for works in or near the Parish. We only comment on purely 'Planning' grounds, using Local and National planning policies for guidance which still support the purposes of Green Belts and AONBs. Comments have usually been agreed via e-mail, with as much consultation with residents as possible.

Village Cleaning

The Parish Council employed Ian Croker to keep our public footpaths maintained and the village clean and clear of litter. He has just retired from his post and we thank him on behalf of the whole Parish for his many years of diligent service to our community. He will be greatly missed and the Parish Council is now seeking to employ his replacement. His was essential works, so a replacement Parish Sweeper is now quite an urgent requirement. If you or someone you know would be interested in this work, please contact Des Wighton, the Chair, or Geoff Davis, the Clerk. The work clearly makes a very noticeable difference to the village and roads as a whole, and is one of the most important services we provide. Ian did a fine job throughout the Parish, and a huge vote of thanks is extended to him.

Footpaths and Open Spaces Maintenance

The Parish Council employs Jeff Avis Garden Services to keep the village car park area, Miss Davies's Garden, and the playground mown and maintained. Again this is essential work and makes a very noticeable difference to the village and this fine job throughout the Parish also deserves a huge vote of thanks.

The council has also worked with B&NES Council, Landowners, and Cotswold Volunteer Wardens to maintain and improve footpaths and open spaces.

Highways Maintenance

Tucking Mill Toads (TMT) - Tucking Mill Lane Road Closure – TMT operated a Voluntary programme in 2023 and some 2,500 amphibians were rescued from the road, with about 200 found dead and a similar number fatally injured. They sought a full road closure for the 2024 migration, but this idea was not supported by the two Parishes of Monkton Combe and South Stoke. Favouring a voluntary scheme with signage. Signage was provided by B&NES Highways and the rescue programme went ahead finishing just recently. We await feedback from the group about the success this year.

Brassknocker Hill Speed Limits and Weight Restrictions – Cllr. Charles Carr is leading on this matter and is recording accidents and incidents. He is liaising with Ward Cllr. Fiona Gourley and Highways Officers to set up a group to do a Speedwatch.

Tucking Mill Lane - Deceptive Bank – B&NES Highways have installed bollards at the location to prevent any further occurrence of a vehicle sliding down the embankment.

Shaft Road - Tarmac drive extension protruding into road – B&NES Highways are now aware of this issue and have contacted the homeowner. The works that have taken place are unauthorised. The homeowner is working with Highways to revise the works, the first submission has been found to be unacceptable and a revised design submission is awaited. The homeowner is keen to work with B&NES Highways to resolve this issue to everyone's satisfaction.

No parking, Church Cottages Residents only – Notices – It was reported that these notices displayed in the property's windows are causing some measure of confusion. The Clerk wrote to each property, highlighting the confusion caused, inviting them to the next Parish Council meeting so the Parish Council can better understand the issues that led to these notices, and asking that they be removed in the interim.

Mount Pleasant Footpath – BA16/1 Gate onto Shaft Road – Cllr. Mike Wareham investigated the matter and reported that it is an old and substantial gate, within the Conservation Area. It is not considered feasible to attempt to change it.

Parish Works – Repairs and Improvements

Website and IT Upgrades – The website has been upgraded and now covers most, if not all, of the Accessibility requirements.

Parish Council Noticeboard – A36 Petrol station – This noticeboard has fallen into disrepair, so the board has been decommissioned with a notice to that effect, and that has been in place for approximately three months without any comment. It will therefore be removed in due course.

Village Hall and Village Car Park – The windows have been replaced throughout the Village Hall. The Parish Council is currently investigating provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points for the Car park.

Village Playpark – Other than the Playground Inspection by RoSPA Inspectors and some minor cleaning works, there were no works to the playpark.

Miss Davis Garden – Only the usual general maintenance by Jeff Avis this year.

Lockup Repairs and Maintenance – There have been no repairs or works to Lockup this year.

Parish Council Finances

Parish Council Reserves at the end of 2023-24 have increased slightly from the previous year, primarily due to improved interest rates on our deposit accounts, and the increase in precept 2023-24 to recover the deficit of the previous year. Our reserves remain at just above what is considered a safe level of one times the Precept (Reserve of £13,397, Precept of £12,893). The improved interest rates are a consequence of high inflation and the Parish Council has therefore increased the precept to cover an anticipated 4% increase in costs. So an increase of £657 (£12,236 to £12,893) which also represents a 4% increase in the Average Household Contribution.

Full details of all the Councils Finances can be found on the website at <http://monktoncombecpc.org/core-business/finance/> where the Audit is currently in progress.

B&NES Ward Councillor support - Finally, we thank Fiona Gourley and Matt McCabe, our Ward Councillors for their ongoing help and support throughout the year. Fiona Gourley has worked particularly hard to ensure the 94 Bus Service has been retained.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in the VILLAGE HALL at 7:30 pm on Tuesday 16th April. The Parish Council is required to hold such a meeting, in person and in public between 1st March and 1st June each year.



Des Wighton. Chairman, Monkton-Combe Parish Council.