

ASH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Julie Ferguson. Chilthorne Knapp, Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil, BA22 8QZ

Tel: 07783 475200

E-mail: clerk@ashpcsomerset.com

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting (APM) of Ash held on Wednesday 3 May 2023 at 18:00hrs

Present –

Cllr Steve Davey (Chair), 14 members of the public

18:00 – Meeting opened

01 Apologies for absence

None.

02 To approve the minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the previous APM – Mon 6 June 2022

03 Chairman of the Parish Council's report

Chair's Report 2023

I was interested to see that the Bank Holiday Monday to celebrate the Coronation is being designated the Big Help-Out; intended to "encourage people to try volunteering for themselves and join the work being undertaken to support their local areas."

This is, of course, not a new idea. The entire Parish Council is run by volunteers, who give up vast amounts of time, effort and energy to keep things ticking along, and to try to make our Parish a better place to live.

This includes managing all of the ground maintenance around the village, looking after trees, the cemetery, creating a new cemetery, creating and distributing the Parish newsletter, providing disabled parking bays, bus shelters, applying for grants, organising celebrations as well as attending the regular Parish Meetings. It also generally includes cleaning toilets, planting trees, mending stuff, sticking up signs and all manner of unpaid tasks – where we receive precious little thanks or recognition. Usually, all we get is grief and derision, particularly if we are perceived to have erred in some way.

It isn't just the Parish Council that relies on volunteers giving time and effort to make the Parish a better place.

The Millennium Woods Group, Ash in Bloom, the Ash Biodiversity Group, the Village Hall Trust, the Coronation and Platinum Jubilee Organising Groups, the volunteers who planted hundreds of hedging trees in the new cemetery and those who regularly donate and erect the Village Christmas tree all carry out vital work and crucially save the Parish Council, which means everyone in the Parish, from having to pay a market rate to get these things done.

It is this level of volunteering that helped to allow the Parish Council to freeze its precept for the second year running. This is the element of the Council Tax which is set by the Parish Council to pay for the work that is needed in the Parish. There is no cap on any increase, and many Parish Councils, including some not a million miles away, have used this opportunity to raise their precept by as much as 20% or even 30%. Freezing our precept for the second year running, means that

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the amount that every Council Tax payer in the parish, pays into the Parish funds has remained the same for three years – in the face of soaring inflation. Were it not for the volunteering that already goes on in the Parish, we would have to double, or even triple the amount that is charged.

04 Village Groups Report

Ash Rovers Report

Ash Rovers under 12s are thrilled to have been able to return to Ash Recreation Ground for our Winter training. The team originated with pupils from Ash Primary School, and we have always considered it our spiritual home – only moving when grounds weren't maintained. Although we have members from around the area, many started off at Ash Primary, and we have members who still live in the Parish. We are intending to continue to use Ash Recreation Ground as our winter training ground, and are looking into raising funds to improve the facilities, and even hold friendly games there - unfortunately the ground currently slopes too much as a venue for league games. We are though, glad to be back and glad to be a part of the village again.

Ash Biodiversity Report – Attachment 1

Ash Millennium Wood – Attachment 2

St Mary's PCC

It was reported that the Diocese had reduced its number of Vicars to cover the Benefice and therefore they would be joining with another local Benefice with the likelihood that services would be reduced. The Church however continued to attract a small but regular congregation.

Ash In Bloom

ASH IN BLOOM – 2023 ANNUAL REPORT DELIVERED TO ASH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 3rd May 2023

Thank you for this opportunity for Ash in Bloom, a volunteer community group here in Ash, to report on our activities over the past 12 months and our plans for the coming year.

Looking back on what we have achieved this year, we embraced the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations by adopting a red, white and blue colour scheme for this summer's planting of all the village planters along Main Street and at the pavilion. We also decorated both static and pole-planters in Union Jacks, bows and ribbons, all of which appears to have received widespread approval from residents.

With the coronation this weekend we have once again used the red, white and blue theme for our planting.

Back in December we once again dressed all the planters along Main Street in Christmas lights and decorations.

We wish to thank the Parish Council for their £600 grant towards the work we do in enhancing the village street scene.

I would also like to publicly thank JP Davis for volunteering to repair the wheelbarrow planter, as it turned out it was a much bigger job than we first thought as it was in such poor shape it had to be remade. Thanks also for the donation of wood for the project from Richard Tomsett.

Ash in Bloom once again arranged for residents to participate in a bulk order and delivery of well priced and healthy summer plants in the Jubilee scheme colours and a number of residents took up the offer.

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Looking forward, our plan for the coming year is to concentrate on planting and maintaining the summer floral displays in all the static planters and pole-planters along Main Street and decorating them at Christmas.

One of our biggest challenges is the watering of plants needed throughout the summer months. I'm pleased to say that this year we had several residents who helped by watering a planter near their home. This is much appreciated but we still need more helpers if possible. If there is a planter near your home you would be willing to help water or if there is any other way you might want to get involved, please phone me on 01935 825020 or email me at ashinbloom123@gmail.com

Many thanks

Antoinette Groves, Chair, Ash in Bloom

Makers Place

The owner of Makers Place spoke enthusiastically about the activities they offered in the Parish. They also reported on the successful recent events that had taken place.

Coffee & Chat

This was held every Wednesday when the Post Office was open and all proceeds were given to the following 4 charities:

- School in a Bag
- Makers Place
- Age Concern UK
- Shelter Box

05 County Councillors Report

SOMERSET COUNCIL REPORT - ASH MAY 3rd 2023

1.1 - Deadline approaches for two Alternative Fund Energy payments

Householders in Somerset could be due for government payments to help towards the costs of heating their homes, under two separate schemes.

The first scheme is for those who heat their homes with an alternative fuel such as wood pellets, LPG or oil, as many do in rural and some urban areas. Those householders could be due a £200 one-off payment from the government, but they must apply by 31 May.

The payment is aimed at people who do not use electricity or mains gas for domestic heating and who have not received a payment from their electricity supplier. The payment isn't means tested.

Householders must supply an invoice or receipts to show that they have purchased at least £200 of alternative fuels since June 2022.

The second scheme is for households that have not received a £400 discount on their energy bills from an electricity supplier (in six instalments from Oct 2022 to March 2023). They may be entitled to a £400 one-off payment from the government.

The scheme is aimed at those who don't pay directly to an electricity company for the energy they use in their home, for example residents of care homes, park home sites and people living above commercial property that does not have a separate meter for the domestic part. The payment isn't means tested.

To find out more about both schemes and to make an application, search 'Apply for energy bill support if you do not get it automatically' into the GOV.UK webpage search bar.

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For anyone who may qualify for this support but does not have access to the internet, they can make an application to the government by telephone on 0808 175 3287, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

All applications must be made to the government and not to the council. There is more information here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/benefits-and-payments/alternative-energy-bills-support-scheme/>

1.2 - Somerset primary school admission figures announced for 2023

Nearly 99% of Somerset's youngest children were offered a primary school place at one of their top three choices, Somerset Council's latest school admission figures show. Overall, 98.94% of the 5,182 applicants were offered a place at one of their top three choices, with 94.54% receiving their first choice.

Of the 5,182 primary school applications received this year:

1st preferences met – 94.54 % (4,899 offers)

2nd preferences met – 3.88% (201 offers)

3rd preferences met – 0.52% (27 offers)

Last year 5,296 applications for primary school places were received. Of those, 98.62% of applicants received one of their top three preferences, with 93.4% receiving their first primary school preference.

1.3 - Bus use on rise as operator is praised for making timely improvements

Figures show more people in Somerset are choosing to 'Bus It' following the introduction of lower fares and evening buses as part of Somerset Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Since the introduction of a £1 fare for a single journey in Taunton, along with evening bus services on some routes, both funded by BSIP money, as well as a sustained 'Bus It' campaign by Somerset Council and the Somerset Bus Partnership, passenger numbers have increased by nearly 25 per cent on First Bus/Buses of Somerset services in Taunton area.

Similarly, following the introduction of the £2 fare for a single journey in Somerset, funded by the Government's Help for Homes scheme, passenger numbers have increased by around 14 per cent across the county. The Government has also officially announced its intention to continue the £2 fare across the country until 30 June.

Somerset Council and the Somerset Bus Partnership launched the 'Bus It' campaign last summer to try and encourage more people to 'Bus It'. You can find out more about it here, along with the various initiatives: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/bus-it-you-know-it-makes-sense/>

1.4 - Somerset recycling goes top 30

Somerset's green-minded residents have helped the county climb into the top 30 councils for recycling.

In Defra's recently published league tables, Somerset's 2021-2022 recycling rate of 56.2% ranks it 28 out of 228 local authorities – putting it in the top 15%.

In 2020-21 Somerset ranked 59 out of 228, with a recycling rate of 52.4%.

And, with the full impact of Recycle More's expanded collections yet to be felt, Somerset Council is confident that the 2022-23 figures will see it climb even further.

The Council is committed to a greener, more sustainable county working hard to help homeowners recycle more and waste less.

In 2021-22, almost 150,000 tonnes of waste was recycled or reused, saving around 133,000 tonnes of carbon – the equivalent of taking more than 51,000 cars off the road for a year.

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Of that, 97.2% was recycled into new products and package in the UK. Of the 5,771 tonnes of plastics collected, 99.4% were reprocessed in the UK.

Somerset's hard-working crews make more than 350,000 collections a week. For more information about what happens to the recycling they collect, check the Somerset Recycling Tracker on the Somerset Council website somerset.gov.uk/waste.

1.5 - Sign-up for the latest climate news

Somerset Council is asking residents to sign-up for its new climate newsletter.

The new Somerset Council cross-county monthly newsletter was launched near the end of April, and you can sign-up to receive it on the Somerset Council website:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-food-safety/climate-and-ecological-emergency/newsletter-sign-up/>.

Sent on the last Friday of every month, it will be full of news, project updates, and inspirational ideas about the work going on in the county in response to the Climate Emergency, along with information and tips to help us all live better, waste less and reduce our environmental impact. If we all do our bit and love where we live, we can keep Somerset clean, green and attractive.

Making Somerset a greener, more sustainable place is one of the Council's top priorities, working with the Somerset Climate Network and other organisations, networks and individuals keen to make a difference.

1.6 - Greener homes project lands crucial grant funding

A ground-breaking project to help Somerset homes become more energy efficient has won crucial funding.

Somerset Climate Action Network (SomersetCAN) in collaboration with Somerset Council and Frome, Glastonbury, and Bruton Town Councils, have successfully bid for a £50,000 grant to set up a not-for-profit service promoting and supporting 'retrofitting'.

Retrofitting means making changes to an existing home that help reduce energy bills and greenhouse gas emissions, making the homes more comfortable to live in.

Backed by the grant from MCS Charitable Foundation, Retrofit Somerset aims to speed up retrofitting delivery across the county by:

- Bringing together existing climate groups, Parish Councils, not-for-profit organisations, and others to develop a workable model for delivering retrofit across the county.
- Enhancing Retrofit Somerset as a one-stop website that helps to inform and connect homeowners and community groups with local retrofit contractors.
- Accelerating the widespread adoption of low-carbon technologies like heat pumps and PV panels.
- Helping groups of homeowners to work together to achieve practical solutions, including grouping together to get discounts on retrofit works.

Retrofit Somerset will have its own dedicated project manager, as well as local advocates in communities trained to engage locally to raise awareness of the benefits of retrofit for homeowners to start their retrofit journey.

In its first year, the project aims to create an investable business plan to attract further funding to help continue essential work to decarbonise Somerset homes.

For more information about Retrofit Somerset, including retrofit stories from Somerset residents and a directory of retrofitting suppliers and contractors, visit retrofitsomerset.info

1.7 - £250 "Golden Hello" for new childminders in Somerset

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Somerset Council is offering a "Golden Hello" grant worth £250 to those who would like to be a childminder. The £250 can be used to help with training and set up costs. Childminding is a rewarding occupation for anyone who likes working with children.

The post is ideal for new parents who wish to spend more time fitting work around their own children. It can also be a useful first step into other childcare and education roles, and may also suit people leaving teaching or other education support roles, but who still want to work with children. Deciding your own working hours and charges means the role can be flexible.

The Council offers guidance and training to newly registered childminders and supports them through Ofsted registration and beyond.

If you are looking for a change, would like to work from home and have a passion for supporting children to learn and grow through exciting play opportunities, why not consider childminding?

To find out more about becoming a childminder, and for an information pack please call 0300 123 2224 or visit www.somerset.gov.uk/register

1.8 - How a small Somerset town grew its care and volunteer workforce and brought in a cool £1m in unclaimed benefits

A small Somerset town has brought in more than £1.4m in unclaimed benefits and seen its community care workforce expand from just 3 to 35 since its homegrown care scheme was established in 2018. Wiveliscombe - or 'Wivey' as it's known to locals - is a small town in Somerset which responded to the crisis in care by creating a 'connector' scheme signposting people who need help to self-employed carers.

These carers are known as 'Micro-providers', help local residents with a range of activities, from personal care such as help with staying clean, ensuring meals are provided and medication is taken, as well as providing company and conversation.

Wivey Cares is the brainchild of David Patterson, a retired social worker who founded the scheme as a way of providing a very local solution to the crisis in care.

Mr Patterson said: "Wivey is a rural town, and the conventional model of care at home just doesn't work here for this reason. We believed that there must be people who lived locally who could meet the need for care, which would support the work of government agencies, reducing the cost of services provided and helping people live independently in their homes for longer.

"As a result, we now have more than 35 carers who can access meaningful self-employment, live locally, and offer really personalised support. To date we have managed and helped more than 300 people fill in forms and claim their Attendance Allowance. This is financial support the government offers which can help people with extra costs if they have a disability where they need someone to help look after them. At any one time we believe we are supporting between 120 and 140 clients to stay in their own homes, keeping them close to friends and family.

"This has resulted in nearly £1.4m of previously unclaimed benefits being received by Wivey residents, creating jobs, and stimulating our local economy."

People who are interested in setting up their own local care scheme can contact communityenterprise@somerset.gov.uk for more information.

1.9 - BT handed heavy fine for roadworks violations

Nearly £15k of fines were handed to BT for roadworks offences in Frome. The telecommunications firm was found guilty of two offences which included failing to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Somerset Council is responsible for managing the road network and prosecuted BT earlier this year as part of its commitment to minimising disruption and keeping the public safe.

The case, heard at Taunton Magistrates on Thursday 16 March, related to the following:

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On Friday 21 October 2022, in contravention of S65 of NRSWA 1991 by failing to install traffic management to ensure the safety of pedestrians, particularly those with disabilities and the travelling public affected by the works. BT was fined £8,000 for this offence.

In addition, BT carried out the works, at Butts Hill, Frome without a valid or deemed permit contrary to Regulation 19, The Traffic Management Permit Scheme (England) Regulations 2007. BT was fined £500 for this offence. The fines against BT totalled £8,500, with costs of £4,319.86 and a surcharge of £2,000 awarded against them. A combined total of £14,819.86.

In passing the sentence, the court gave full credit to BT for guilty pleas entered at the earliest opportunity and accepted in mitigation that BT took the following steps: it had issued guidance for its sub-contractors to take account of and to adhere to when conducting street works; and that it has since increased its training of operatives.

For more information and news about Somerset Council's Waste Services visit somerset.gov.uk/waste and follow @somersetwaste on Facebook and Twitter.

1.9 - Soft plastic recycling collections piloted in parts of Frome

A small-scale pilot of the collection of plastic bags and wrapping for recycling will soon be starting in Somerset – for invitees only. Following the success of expanded Recycle More collections, Somerset Council successfully bid to be part of a national 'FlexCollect' trial of kerbside collection of these soft plastics. The trial collections will be available to around 3,600 homes across two locations in Frome, starting near the end of May.

Those able to participate will receive information in the post shortly. No other householders, in Frome or elsewhere in the county, can participate or request to take part.

The pilot collections will pick-up a wide range of plastic bags and wrapping, including carrier bags, bread bags, confectionary wrappers, crisp packets, food wrapping and cling film. They will be part of the usual weekly recycling collections, to be put out for collection in plastic sacks provided to participating households.

The costs of the pilot collections are funded nationally. The only costs to the council are time and resources. Depending on how the trials progress, it is expected that they will be expanded to more Somerset homes next year.

For more information and news about Somerset Council's Waste Services visit somerset.gov.uk/waste and follow @somersetwaste on Facebook and Twitter.

1.10 - Somerset Youth Parliament urges schools to promote new mental health app for students

A new mental health app for young people has been launched in Somerset. The free Tellmi app is now available for all local 11-18 year olds, and gives young people the tools to manage their own mental health and support others.

Commissioned by NHS Somerset, Tellmi is the only fully pre-moderated, dedicated, peer support app which is considered safe for children aged 11+. Posts are approved by human moderators within an average of 30 minutes, and in-house counsellors intervene to support when needed. Local young people who download the app will have 365-day access to support, where they can anonymously discuss their feelings in a safe environment.

Data is showing the app to be improving mental health outcomes for young people across the county already, with 83% of users reporting feeling less isolated, 45% who self-harm saying they had stopped or reduced self-harming, and 1 in 3 young people who felt suicidal experiencing fewer suicidal thoughts as a result of using the app.

Working with the Youth Parliament, Young Somerset, Somerset Council and CAMHS (Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services), the project aims to support young people on waiting lists, but also anyone who might benefit from further support.

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So far, Tellmi has been promoted in eight schools and colleges across Somerset, but members of Somerset Youth Parliament are calling for more schools to sign up, as 75% of children and young people with mental health issues don't get the treatment they need.

The app can be downloaded at Google Play or the App Store. To find out more about Tellmi, visit www.tellmi.help

1.11 - GET INVOLVED Help make Somerset more accessible: your views needed

A year-long project to make Somerset more accessible for Disabled people was launched on 1 April 2023.

'Accessible Somerset' is an ambitious project which will ask Disabled people how their life could be improved in various areas. The project is seeking volunteers to share their views and is asking for individuals and organisations to get involved by contacting Disability.Inc@wecil.org.uk.

'Accessible Somerset' will begin by working with local Disabled people and organisations to help map the areas of need across Somerset. This will help to identify the key areas of focus for the project.

To deliver this project, Somerset Council has teamed up with WECIL Ltd - a Disabled People's Organisation who offer a range of services which support independent living. WECIL have been working with both public and private sector organisations since 2016, supporting senior management teams, HR professionals and Equality Diversity and Inclusion officers to create accessible, inclusive environments.

If you would like to be involved in the project, please contact Kinny Chinangwa or Alison Browning at Disability.Inc@wecil.org.uk.

1.12 - City break escape is new bonus lottery prize

Somerset West Lottery is taking part in an initiative that could secure a city break for the lucky winner. It is the new, national bolt-on prize - the third prize initiative to launch this year.

Everyone who signs up to buy one or more lottery tickets from 2 - 27 May 2023 will be in with the chance to win a European city break: seeing the architecture and nightlife of Barcelona, sampling the art and food of Florence, soaking up the culture in Paris - or simply unwinding and seeing the sights. The prize is courtesy of the external lottery management company Gatherwell.

All tickets bought in the qualifying period will automatically be entered into the bonus prize draw as well as being in with a chance to win up to £25,000 in the weekly lottery run by Somerset Council.

There were seven cash prize winners and 32 winners overall in the last draw on 22 April.

The Somerset West Lottery offers registered good causes the opportunity to raise income for their organisation by selling tickets to the public.

It gives 50p from every £1 ticket sold to local registered good causes with 10p from every ticket sale going into a community grant fund for which local good causes can apply.

If you know of a good cause wishing to raise funds or would like to buy a ticket contact the Somerset West Lottery on 0300 30 20 666; support@somersetwestlottery.co.uk or visit www.somersetwestlottery.co.uk

2.0 Local Issues

2.1 - Highways and Transport There will be a traffic monitoring system implemented after the removal of the 40mph restriction that has been authorised for the school. We will have more information when and where that will be put into place on the road between Ash and Tintinhull. Awaiting news on timeframe.

2.2 – Ash Village Highways Overall discussions and aims for Ash and surrounding. Creating a viable safe pathway for cycles and pedestrians towards Stapleton and Martock. Ongoing.

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Keeping check on the speed of vehicles through the village – I was informed by Paul at Martock PC that the SID (one of) from Martock has been implemented.

2.3 – Land Sale The proposal of the sale of the farm land by the school has been withdrawn.

07 Public Open Session

A resident asked if the PC would consider installing a track around the Recreation Field for Children to cycle around.

Thanks were given to the Councillors for all that they do.

A representative from Wessex Internet gave a report on the introduction of Fibre To The Property (FTTP) as part of the Connecting Devon and Somerset scheme that was going to be coming to Ash around September time, and urged anyone interested to register on their website.

18:55 - Meeting closed

Chairman

Date