# **Baltonsborough Parish Council**

Clerk to the Council: Caron Potts

Withy Lane Farmhouse, Silver Street, Barton St David, Somerton, Somerset.

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**Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Annual Parish Council meeting held on**

**Thursday 6th May 2021 commencing at 7pm.**

**Present:** Cllrs A Wotton (Chair), S Everitt (vice chair), M Dykes, F Maddock, M Phillips, A Blackburn and R Clapp.

**In Attendance:** Mrs Caron Potts (Clerk), Mendip District Councillor N Woollcombe-Adams, 3 members of the public.

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###### A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence - None received.

**2. Minutes of the previous Annual Meeting held on 25th April 2019**

To confirm and sign (when safe to do so) as a correct record. Agreed unanimously.

**3. Matters Arising**

The fingerpost between Ham Street and Lottisham needs attention,

**Action Clerk** to contact West Pennard PC to see if they ‘own’ it and have plans to repair it.

**4. Chair’s Report on behalf of the Parish Council**

**Chairman’s Report 2019 - 21**

**Reporting period**

As a result of the 2020 annual parish meeting being cancelled due to restrictions related to Covid-19, this report covers the period May 2019 to April 2021

**Operational practice**

The impact of Covid-19 has been huge on us all, but after a very brief period of uncertainty at the start of the pandemic, the Parish Council has continued its business with meetings being held virtually. We have also endeavoured to continue with our programme of improvements as far as has been possible, the results of which can be seen later in this report.

**Personnel**

During the period of this report we have lost the services of Pat Jordain and Louisa Medlicott, both of whom served the village as Parish Councillors. We thank Pat and Louisa for their hard work and dedication and wish them both well in the future. The other person who has left the council is Cheryl Aldridge, who as our clerk did sterling work over many years, kept us all on track and contributed a valuable combination of pragmatism and humour to our meetings. It is good to see that Cheryl will continue to serve the village as a member of the Village Hall and Playing Field Trust.

Three new councillors, Mary Phillips, Malcolm Dykes and Rob Clapp have joined us. Mary leads on environmental and energy issues (including securing the Village Hall solar panel grant and our tree policy), Malcolm is very involved in measures to make our roads safer and Rob in the move to improve the village hall and playing field.

Our new clerk is Caron Potts. Caron has expertly overseen a range of structural and administrative changes to the council’s operations as well as guided us through some of the challenges thrown up by the Covid-19 restrictions.

**Financial matters**

All matters pertaining to finance can be seen in the annual audit which is available on the Council’s website

**Planning**

Twenty-five planning applications have been received. Of these, the Parish Council has recommended approval of nineteen, refusal of two with four left to the Mendip planners to decide. Of course these are only recommendations and Mendip District Council can, and sometimes does, overrule our recommendations.

**Our programme**

Despite the restrictions put on us all over recent times, the Parish Council has been active in its efforts to make improvements.

**Traffic and road safety**

An **agricultural vehicle protocol** was created and agreed between the PC and the majority of farmers and agricultural contractors to reduce the risk of accidents on our village roads.

More generally, we have established a Speed watch team which provides data on traffic speeds and a reminder to all road users of the need to stay within legal speed limits

We are currently in the process of introducing SIDs (**Speed Indicator Devices**) in partnership with Butleigh PC, which will be a clear indicator to any road users driving above the speed limits.

**Energy and environment**

A wonderful new orchard of traditional fruit trees has been established on the site of the old play park.

We have introduced a tree policy with an ambition to not only protect the trees and hedgerows that we have, but to support and encourage the planting of new trees and establish new hedges.

Our commitment to green energy can be seen in two projects that the Parish Council has initiated. Firstly we have made all villagers aware of opportunities to move towards **solar panels** through a scheme called Solar Streets. Secondly we have secured major external funding to install solar panels and electric vehicle charging points at the **village hall**.

**Communications**

The Parish Council has worked in partnership with neighbouring villages to try to improve fibre enabled broadband through the 01458 project, something that will benefit so many people, especially with an increase in home working. We have also updated our website and increased our use of social media to ensure we reach as many people as possible.

**Our response to Covid-19**

Since the beginning of the first lock-down in 2020, the Parish Council became a key partner in creating and maintaining the **Baltonsborough Volunteers Support Group**. With funding from the Somerset Community Fund, and more importantly the desire to help shown by around 70 volunteers, we have provided practical, social and emotional support to any villagers who have needed help. Of course so many villagers have also ‘done their bit’ outside of this scheme, so as a village we can be proud of the way in which we have responded to such a strange, and for most of us, unparalleled set of circumstances.

**Thanks**

This is normally where, as chair, I thank individuals who have made a special contribution to the village during the reporting period. For this report however, I feel it is more appropriate to thank each and every villager for the way they have supported their families, friends, neighbours and often complete strangers during this most unusual period in our lives. Baltonsborough can be proud of the community spirit that has been so evident over the past fourteen months. Thank you everybody.

**5. District Councillors’ Report by Cllr Nigel** **Woollcombe-Adams**

Other than Covid response related activity which saw a significant number of DC employees deployed to assist with injections and welfare, it has been a relatively quite year.

Planning has been an issue due to phosphates with any new applications now needing to prove offsetting measures. The backlog in the county is now over 11,000 applications.

Live meeting will resume from 17th May.

The Unitary Authority decision from the Minister has been delayed until the Summer. The Districts are going to conduct a public pole to gauge opinion.

**6. County Councillors’ Report by Cllr Nigel Hewitt-Cooper**

**Somerset County Council Annual Report.**

**Response to the Covid19 Pandemic**

This has truly been an exceptional year. There are four statistics that demonstrate just how involved the Council has been in supporting residents:

• SCC’s Public Health Team has managed over 1,700 COVID outbreaks and situations, saving lives across the county.

• SCC helped support those who needed it most by working with partners to provide or deliver 500,000 meals or food into our communities over the past year.

• The SCC contact centre has made an over 70,000 phone calls to check on those shielding, to arrange help and support or to make vaccination bookings for the NHS.

• SCC have supported our care providers and schools by spending millions of pounds to secure more than 11m pieces of personal protection equipment (PPE).

Throughout the pandemic Somerset’s Public Health team has played a critical role in designing and delivering essential Covid-19 services to keep infection rates among the lowest in the country and keep people safe. This has been achieved through support to hundreds of workplaces, care homes, schools and households with outbreaks to minimise the spread. During the last year SCC have managed over 1,700 incidents with more than 20,000 cases being detected within our County boundaries. Somerset was an early pioneer for local contact tracing increasing the number of contacts made based on local insight and helping to reduce spread of the virus.

Adult Social Care mobilised pop-up care homes at the peaks of the pandemic, sourced and provided over 11 million pieces of PPE and supported settings with infection control measures and advice so they could continue to stay open for visitors. Technology innovations have kept them connected while a new app was developed by SCC’s own team to support the NHS by revolutionising the way spare beds are tracked. Throughout the pandemic over 700 micro- providers have supported over 5000 people with care and support each week.

Children’s Services have supported all schools to ensure they could stay open, coordinating transport, providing emergency PPE and distributing over 850 Dept. of Education devices and 50 SCC devices to enable young people to access virtual learning. Extra funds have been made available to provide families with free school meals and support during lockdown, multi-agency hubs have been established to support vulnerable children who have had to self-isolate and over 220 staff have been trained to support pupil health and wellbeing.

SCC provided funding to ensure all schools in Somerset were able to provide vouchers for children who are entitled to Free School Meals over Christmas, February Half-Term and Easter, as well as additional funding so that more families and children in need of support could receive help.

SCC’s vital Communications role included a new Covid-19 website, social media campaign, Your Somerset Newspaper, leaflets, press, radio and TV messaging as well as a number of informative, timely and accessible news-style videos filmed by ex BBC veteran reporter Clinton Rogers.

**Other key achievements in delivering SCC Business Plan**

SCC's focus on good financial management has continued during 2020/21 including the management of 15 different Covid funding streams and the various reporting and audit requirements around them. Latest budget monitoring reports shows continued tight financial control and a forecast underspend of £6.6m for the year. This will be third year in a row that that authority has come in under-budget, demonstrating financial robustness and resilience.

Investment in infrastructure has included:

• completion of construction work on the iAero Centre in Yeovil which will support innovation and collaboration in the aerospace supply chain.

• opening of the Wiveliscombe and Wells Enterprise centres with a strong take up of space with 90% and 70% occupancy rates respectively. Construction work for Bruton Enterprise Centre commenced earlier this year, while the Digital Innovation Centre at the Firepool site has received planning approval.

• £19million upgrade of Junction 25 of the M5 won three of the five accolades at the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transport Awards including Project of the Year

• continuing crucial work of maintaining the highway network despite the impact of Covid, including repairing 17,947 carriageway potholes, only slightly fewer than in the previous year before the pandemic.

School projects completed include the new Hazlebrook Campus at Selworthy School, Nerrols Primary School; extension and IT upgrade at Milborne Port School, seven-class expansion for Willowdown Academy Primary School; the new King Ina Church of England Academy; the £8m expansion of Bridgwater College Academy and the £7m expansion of Bishop Fox’s in Taunton. Finally, Polden Bower, a £23m special school in Bridgwater which will cater for 160 students with complex needs in Somerset.

The Climate Change response has seen the expansion of Recycle More, initially in the Mendip area; the decarbonising of SCC buildings, promotion and provision of public transport and the enabling of SCC staff to work from home and cut emissions and pollutants as a consequence of fewer commuter miles. A £1 million Somerset Climate Emergency Community Fund was created to encourage innovative community projects that share the Council’s vision of working towards a climate resilient Somerset. More than 136 applications were submitted and 40 projects across Somerset were awarded grant funding.

Somerset County Council have invested in 153 apprenticeships and have supported 87 staff to complete apprenticeships. In addition SCC have also supported 20 small employers throughout Somerset to recruit apprentices into their workforce.

**7. Open Public Forum**

The Chair opened the meeting to the public, he stated that later in the year the intention was to hold a joint public meeting with the new Village Hall and Playing Field Trust to discuss combined future plans for the village.

The poor state of repair of Church Walk was raised together with the pavement around the War Memorial. **Action Clerk** to report to highways.

**8. Close of Meeting at 19.19**

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