

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2024 in Culmstock Village Hall 6.30pm

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Miss L Jones (Chairman), Mrs J Saunders, Mrs J Zebedee, Dr C Bass, Mrs R Balchin, Sarah Leppard, C Kay, MDDC Cllrs. Simon Clist and Natasha Bradshaw, the Clerk and various members of the public including various representatives from Parish organisations.

Apologies: Devon County Councillor Ray Radford.

64. The Chairman gave a brief report (as below) and welcomed everyone to the meeting - the format of the evening was given being that there were various representatives from organisations present and that the evening was an opportunity for everyone to spend time to see what is going on in the village. Thanks were extended to all of the organisations that had attended, together with those people that had helped to organise the evening; particularly Jude the Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman continued by extending thanks to everyone involved with the Parish Council - all of the Parish Councillors and the Clerk, the Footpath Team for their dedication and hard work, the Parish Warden and the First Responder who also keeps an eye on the defibrillator. A good team really helps to share the workload.

Last year we were pleased to welcome Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw who was elected along with Cllr. Simon Clist as our Mid Devon District Councillors (MDDC). Our Devon County Council (DCC) Councillor is Cllr. Ray Radford and an annual report was left available for attendees to read (*see below*).

As a Parish Council there is always a lot to do and a good team helps everyone. The Parish Council has increased the number of bins and dog bins over the last couple of years and hopes that this is now sufficient, currently replacement benches and noticeboards are being considered. The park and pavilion need constant maintenance and improvements and a Petanque pitch is under discussion currently. Anyone with ideas for the area is encouraged to make contact. S106 funds were referred to with reference to public open space ideas.

The Parish Council continues to award a number of grants with an annual grant given to the village hall & the Beacon of Lights - other grants can be considered.

As a Parish Council, Culmstock subscribes to the Blackdown Hills Parishes Network for which Cllr. Dr Catherine Bass is the Vice-Chairman. A few of us attended the AGM which was held in Culmstock Village Hall last November and Catherine, Charlie, Natasha and Melanie recently undertook a tour of Hinkley Point as organised by the network.

We continue to respond to planning consultations via the district council - please keep an eye out for anything that you may like to respond to.

Anyone with any questions could speak to the Parish Council throughout the evening and everyone was encouraged to take a look at the information those organisations present had provided for the event. The Chairman acknowledged and thanked the organisations present for their hard work in the village - representatives present were noted as The Soap Box Derby, The Fuel Allotment Society, Bellringers, All Saints Church, Culmstock Primary School and PTA, The Beacon of Lights, Blackdown Support Group, and Petanque, also present were the First Responder and the Parish Council P3 Footpath Coordinator. Various councillors present were also representing the Village Hall Committee, the Culmstock News magazine, the Plant Sale and the Flower and Produce Show.

The Chairman finished by informing everyone that the Parish Council had just received its free framed portrait of HRH King Charles to celebrate his new reign, which the Clerk had brought for everyone to see - the hall committee will decide where to display.

The Chairman then passed over to MDDC Councillors Simon Clist and Natasha Bradshaw both of whom gave an overview of their positions at the district council.

65. Annual Report from DCC Cllr. Ray Radford (*left available for attendees to read*): I have been County Councillor for Willand & Uffculme Division for 16 years. As funding is in short supply I am always having fights with the Officers to get things done, potholes of course being the biggest, in such cases it is beneficial to have the support of the Parish Councils.

We operate on a two month cycle and we are placed on various committees, I am on the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Scrutiny (CIRS), the Devon & Somerset and Rescue Authority as well as the Highways and Traffic Committee (HATOC). As the canal runs through our division that puts me on the Canal Advisory Committee. And the Westleigh and Broadpath Liaison Groups, and this is followed up with a DCC full council meeting at the end of the cycle. Sometimes we are placed on specific working groups.

Each year we have an annual meeting where we select a Chairman and Leader for the next year. The Chairman is replaced every year but the Leader invariably continues to the end of each four year period when there is an election for all 62 members.

All of the time I have enjoyed my role, even with the challenging times, but I do my very best to support and represent this community. DCC is one of the more successful authorities to give best value for money with the funding that is available.

I will continue to back what is best for our community, so please contact me if there is any problem that you think I can help with. I have been here a long time and I know my way around and what is possible and what is not quite so possible.

The meeting closed at approximately 8pm.