

BROOMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Tel: 01806 728030 Email: clerk@broomfieldparish.com
<https://broomfieldparish.com>

Public Session

Congratulations on Village Hall and the work that has been done in preparation for Christmas. The Chair concurred that the hall looked great and gave particular thanks to Helen and the Village Hall committee.

A village litter pick will be organised after the hedges are cut (end of February/beginning of March).

Issues raised with the state of Volis Hill. Reported many times and nothing done.

A member of the public reported that Highways are responsible for hedge cutting in July, otherwise landowners are responsible.

There was a major emergency in this village this year and if it had been at this time of year, it would be nearly impossible for emergency services. Clerk to contact Highways to highlight concerns of Parish Council.

Reports from Somerset Councillors

Somerset Councillor Alan Bradford addressed the meeting.

The Minutes

Present: Councillors Steve Hughes, Ali Aras, Doug Wilson, Jess Osman and Lucinda Garland

In Attendance: Donna Durham (Assistant Clerk), Somerset Councillor Alan Bradford and 5 members of the public

1. **Apologies for absence**

Somerset Council Bill Revans

2. **Declaration of interest**

Councillor Steve Hughes – devolution and his role at Somerset Council

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Parish Council held on Tuesday, 26th September 2023 were circulated with the agenda of this meeting and unanimously approved.

4. **Chair's Report**

Roads – noting the financial emergency that has been declared by Somerset Council we still need to report damage to Highways and blocked footpaths. I have reported more than once the blocked drains on Rose Hill, the unacceptable state of a section of Volis Hill which will cause damage to cars and is dangerous to cyclists, the level of gravel at the foot of Shelthorne and the collapse of part of the road on Shelthorne.

I haven't yet reported the damaged sign at Mullins Pond or the deteriorated road markings at many junctions.

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I urge Councillors and the public to report any issues and thank the SC for the repairs lower down Volis Hill but feel we are gradually having our travel options reduced by the terrible state of some roads.

Fly tipping has again increased and this too should be reported.

It was suggested maybe a Lengthsman could be employed across a few parishes for Highway Maintenance and if the LCN have a purpose, it's to look into larger parishes to use individuals. Councillor Wilson to contact Clerk to discuss further.

Devolution – a topic on the agenda. I must tread carefully given I am employed by the Somerset Council, but difficult to see how Broomfield can take on anything with a financial requirement given our small income via the precept. We have no street lights, school, formal leisure or sports facilities, public WC's, mobile library but we can, if we choose to take on, signage cleaning, basic verge maintenance, litter picking but in reality little else. We need to urgently clarify the position of the Council vis a vis the AONB Partnership and the common – I will ask the clerk to do this after the meeting.

The request is noted but as a small community with few services or residents I personally don't feel we can 'take on' assets (mainly as we don't have any) or pay more for services (as our precept raises very little) and we just about manage to break even each year.

Activities – there is a lot happening this week with carols in the church and on the green, the pop up pub on Saturday appeared to be a great success with lots of people attending.

Lastly, I wish all Councillors and residents a very Merry Christmas.

5. Broomfield Commons

Works due to end in March 2025 with the common in a position that is easy to maintain.

Replanted along road.

The glade is being cut which involves coppicing of hazel, tackling invasive laurel by Ham Cottage and replanting with something else.

A decision is yet to be made regarding the cutting of more ash.

Apprenticeships coming to an end and a management plan to be written.

It was reported that the paths are getting narrow by the common and maybe need widening. Broomfield Common tractor could be used to do this.

There are a couple of ash trees that look precarious on the top common and also some dead ones. Councillor Hughes to speak to someone to see how the ash can be dealt with.

It was suggested that the way forward regarding managing the commons is to get interested people together to input into a management plan.

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6. Village Hall Update

Works over last year have included new mullions, windows and roof repairs.

Projects moving forwards include railings, decoration and chairs.

Money is starting to run out and the open day was not as successful as hoped. There is a need to ensure that the property can be maintained and how funds can be sourced to do this.

The Chair congratulated the Village Hall committee on the events held over the last year.

A childproof fence at the front of the property has been discussed and there is a plan to have a memorial bench, fencing and planting.

Broadband is now available (password on the back of the box).

Somerset Councillor Alan Bradford mentioned funding might be available through the AONB.

7. LCN

Discussions around funding.

Devolution – presentation by Cheddon Fitzpaine regarding flooding and got DEFRA, Environment Agency etc together with farmers to find a solution. Farmers putting ‘scrapes’ at bottom of fields and reducing water runoff. Positive result getting everyone together.

Maybe the Parish Council could get owners together to discuss the issues within the parish to prevent flooding. National Trust should also be encouraged to attend regarding solution to the streamway.

Councillor Wilson to contact organiser of the meeting to discuss the way forward.

8. Devolution of Assets

Many of the suggestions don't apply to this Parish Council. Possibly look at signage cleaning if we can do it jointly with other Parish Councils.

Clerk to respond to Somerset Councillor Bill Revans to state that we will work with the LCN but won't be able to take on any devolution at present.

9. Finance

9.1 Receipts and Payments

The Council unanimously approved the Receipts and Payments.

9.2 Defibrillator Contribution

The Council unanimously agreed a donation of £370.

9.3 Budget and Precept

The Council unanimously agreed to increase the precept by 6% to £3,869.

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The meeting closed at 20:49.

Signed _____ (Chairman) 26th March 2024

DRAFT