WEST HATCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of the West Hatch Parish held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 16th May 2017

**ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

**Public: 30 parishioners, G Midworth (Clerk to the Council) Cllr John Williams (TDBC)**

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting, held on 17th May 2016 were approved and signed as a correct record.**

**REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

**The Chairman began by thanking the Councillors for their support and welcomed Liz Bray who was co-opted to the Council in March, following the resignation of Mike Nicholls. Thanks were recorded to Mike Nicholls, to Robert Wheatley for running the Parish’s website and to the Clerk.**

**The Chairman then gave a summary of the main issues that the Parish Council had considered during the past 12 months.**

**Finance**

**A budget of £2315 was agreed for the year and the precept remains unaltered at £2330. Reserves at the beginning of the year were £3216, and out of this a grant of £250 was made in support of the Queen’s 90th Birthday Celebrations.**

**Road Safety**

**Speeding continued to be an issue raised throughout the year. SCC refused to consider further speed monitoring exercises but the Parish Council has applied for funding from the Road Safety Fund (administered by the Avon & Somerset Police) for new village signs incorporating warnings. The outcome of the application is awaited.**

**Broadband Issues**

**For those properties that did not benefit from the Phase 1 roll-out of superfast broadband, a broadband voucher scheme was introduced, providing applicants with the sum of £500 to be used towards the cost of alternative methods of delivery. A number of l parishioners took advantage of this scheme and now benefit from increased broadband speeds thanks to a system installed by Exmoor Technology.**

**Consultations**

**The Parish Council responded to three public consultations throughout the year:**

1. **Merger of TDBC and West Somerset District Council. Whilst the Council supported this proposal, it did express concerns in a number of areas.**
2. **The Government proposal to introduce referenda principles to local councils. The Government proposed to introduce referenda criteria on those local councils increasing its precept by 2% or more, requiring a referendum to be carried out to approve the increase. This would be at the Council’s expense. The Parish Council expressed the view that this was totally inappropriate and the proposal has subsequently been withdrawn.**
3. **SCC sought views on Listening, Learning, Changing. The Parish Council did not support the view that Council Tax should be increased to support key services and that the SCC vision for Somerset was flawed. The three main areas of public health that the council should be addressed were ‘healthy eating’, ‘increased physical activity’, and ‘mental health’.**

**Planning Matters**

**There was a steady trickle of planning applications to which the Council responded, the most contentious of which were plans to extend Walnut Tree Cottage, Meare Green, which was approved by TDBC despite the Council’s objections on the grounds of increased flood risk.**

**A358 Dualling Consultation**

**Highways England announced its public consultation on the A358 proposals at the end of March.**

**All members of the Council, but in particular David Lodge, have given careful consideration to the Council’s response. The Parish Council has held an extraordinary meeting to discuss the issue and will continue to engage with the community in considering its response.**

**MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS**

**Disappointment was expressed that a representative from the Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) was unable to attend and give a presentation. The Clerk explained that she had contacted SWT but they are currently unable to provide speakers for external talks. Their staff is committed to Heritage Lottery funded projects which leaves little time for other activities.**

**A parishioner from Meare Green advised the Council that the Meare Green Noticeboard needed replacing as it was in a dangerous state of repair. The Noticeboard in Slough Green is also in need of attention. A discussion then ensued with regard to the merits in keeping the noticeboards in the parish as many parishioners now have internet access and can obtain parish news from the website. However, it was concluded that the noticeboards do have a role to play in community communications and should be retained.**

**TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE VILLAGE HALL**

**The latest accounts for the Village Hall were presented to the meeting. The accounts show income from lettings of £1453, and general expenses of £1583. The reserves stand at £5345.**

**The meeting closed at 7.25pm**