

**REPORT OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT CHURCH HOUSE, WIDECOMBE
ON THURSDAY 21st MARCH 2019**

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PRESENT: Cllr Mr Newbolt-Young (Chairman), seven Parish Councillors, District Councillor Mike Jeffery, County Cllr George Gribble, 17 members of the public and the Clerk, Suzanna Hughes

APOLOGIES: Cllr Routely, Cllr Southcombe, Ronnie Constant, Maurice Retallick, Roger Claxton

REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL BY THE CHAIRMAN: Roderick Newbolt-Young

The Chairman gave his annual report, a copy of which is attached.

Cllr Booty thanked the Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Council, for his years of service and all that he has done since joining the Parish Council in 1999.

FINANCE REPORT FROM THE CLERK TO THE PARISH COUNCIL: Suzanna Hughes

The Clerk gave her report, a copy of which is attached.

WIDECOMBE VILLAGE HALL – YVETTE ELLIOT

Since the AGM last year when we gave an update on progress we have had a really busy year, but it has been very paperwork based and full of meetings, which means there's not always exciting updates to give along the way! I can assure you that we have made great progress with the project and we continue to be driven to deliver an amazing new community facility for the Parish.

We started 2018 very positively with £10,000 recently granted by Awards for All and that has been spent largely on engaging architects to work with us on the hall designs, but also allowed us to buy in professional support to create a capital investment plan and give clarity about what sorts of funds we might have access to and the total we might expect to receive. This was critical for the feasibility study recommendations as affordability is key and the design needs to be realistic.

After much consultation, planning and research, our feasibility study was published last June and we held an Open Day to discuss the findings after presenting initially to the Parish Council. A vote was conducted for all Parishioners asking "do you support the recommendations of the feasibility study" - 135 votes were counted, with 123 of these in favour, 4 against and 8 abstentions.

A Design Sub-Committee was established to focus on the detail of the building and with continued support from the Architects and a Structural Design Engineer the plans were reworked as a result of the feasibility recommendations and a planning pre-application is now being considered by Dartmoor National Park Authority for the Hayes Field site, next to the tennis courts.

We successfully secured a highly sought after business support grant, giving us 10 days of time with an Advisor to focus on our needs. Debbie has been working closely with us to create a Business Plan and has supported our recent application to the Charities Commission to apply for Charitable Incorporated Organisation status. We await the outcome, but the intention is for the CIO to take on the work started by the Steering Group to complete the design and build of the hall and then the eventual running of this facility. It was agreed that we will be known as Widecombe Community Hall in order to be as inclusive as possible.

Debbie also helped us apply for a further cash grant and we were awarded £12,600 to pay for further architect time, the legal fees associated with setting up a charity and for the eventual buying the site, environmental surveys and training is also covered. Possibly the most exciting element of this grant is to be spent employing the services of a professional bid writer and Amanda will be working with us this year to start making applications to grant funders, big & small, to help us achieve the target of £600,000 to complete this project. The Parish Council will also be holding a vote locally in the coming months to assess support

for granting significant funds to the project by way of raising the Precept and we hope that you will support this request to help us achieve an accessible and purpose-built community facility for all members of the Parish.

We have set a community fundraising target of £50,000 to demonstrate the commitment locally to this project and to help build a sense of ownership. We have raised approximately 20% of this target to date, with quiz nights, race night, raffles, bar at Sailing Club events, receipts from local events such as the Christmas Whist Drive and our major fundraiser last year was the Walk to Widecombe & Fun Day with a Crowdfunding platform along-side. We now have a busy calendar of events planned, including A Duck Race on 7th April, Barn Dance on 29th June and Grand Auction on 14th September alongside our smaller ongoing events. Our website is kept updated with what we're up to and the events that we're planning. You can even buy your tickets online. For regular updates you can be added to our mailing list.

We really appreciate the support we continue to receive and are always happy to talk about what we're doing and why. We are planning another Open Day soon for this purpose and hope to see many of you there.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR: George Gribble

Cllr Gribble commented on DCC's budget and the comprehensive spending review showing a 20% reduction in funding since 2010. Funding has reduced from £115 to £110.5 million in the last year. He advised that the Council has moved towards insourcing rather than outsourcing. He talked about the local challenges including Newbridge, pothole repairs, clearing of buddle holes and resurfacing.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR: Mike Jeffery

Cllr Jeffery was not present at the meeting.

Cllr Fenton reminded the meeting that following the changes to the ward boundaries, Widecombe will be within the ward of Ashburton and Buckfastleigh after the elections in May.

DNPA REPRESENTATIVE: Rob Steemson

£14,000 worth of repairs on the Public Rights of Way have been identified. £4,000 of this is on damaged signposts and £10,000 on other works. We are writing to the DNPA for funds particularly in regard to destination and distances being included on signposts to help showcase Widecombe and would also like support from the Parish Council.

Moor than Meets the Eye funding has seen Ponies, Pounds and Driftway works at Bel Tor Lane, Poundsgate Pound, Shallowford Pound and recently at Venton Lane. Signboards will follow soon.

The Ranger Service has recently renewed its link with the police-based Community Safety Accredited Scheme and there is a Rural Crime initiative being put together for launch soon. Sub-meetings re speeding and dog attacks have been taking place with a specific request for signing and prevention. 4x4s and motorbikes are still a problem – banking/rocks etc particularly at Bonehill.

Newbridge cattle grid – a request has been made to Widecombe and Holne Parish Councils for funding to help with the cost finding a solution to prevent inappropriate parking at Newbridge.

The work of the voluntary wardens was acknowledged and thanks given for all they do.

Ilsington's Beating of the Bounds will take place on Saturday 15 June. The Parish Council will receive an invitation.

The government's 'Glover review' will be reviewing all National Parks including Dartmoor and how the landscapes meet with 21st century needs. The review will also explore how access to landscapes can be improved, how those who live and work in them can be better supported and their role in the growing rural economy.

The meeting was advised of the Donate 4 Dartmoor fund to help with the cost of erosion repairs.

The latest edition of the Enjoy Dartmoor magazine has just been printed and will be distributed in time for Easter.

POLICE REPORT

No report.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

Widcombe Fair – Jenny Clare

This is the third year which the Committee has used the village green and everyone is very happy with the way it's going.

Widcombe PCC – Rev'd Geoffrey Fenton

The last year has seen good use of our beautiful church building for the community and visitors, hosting concerts for the Widcombe Sailing Club and a wonderful Christmas Tree Festival with entries from many village organisations. This Festival, along with the collections from our Christmas services, raised £1,120 for the charity, Young Minds – a vital resource for youngsters struggling with mental health issues.

The year also saw the church benefitting from financial and design contributions from Moor than Meets the Eye – with a splendid new board illustrating the history of bell-ringing in Widcombe and a new, full-colour guidebook for the church.

We are very grateful for the continuing support of the Parish Council for the churchyard maintenance and we have been pleased to receive a grant to replace our floodlights with new, low-energy fittings.

Progress on planning for new disabled access has been slow but this is an agreed priority. We are always looking for ways to enhance the experience of the tens of thousands of visitors who make a trip to the church a key part of their visit, before hopefully visiting a hostelry or two!

Once again there have been many weddings and baptisms and sadly quite a few funerals. The church is available to all, with events such as the packed 100-year Remembrance Day service with school children placing poppy-painted stones by the cross demonstrating the wide connections across the community. I appreciate the role of Rod, as Parish Council Chairman, laying the wreath at the Remembrance Service.

Moor than Meets the Eye – Rev'd Geoffrey Fenton

This project is now complete. £28,000 was granted to spend on improving the experience of visiting Widcombe. Signs have been erected in all establishments telling the story of Widcombe; 8 wax rubbing posts have also been erected around the village; signs have been erected at the pig house and a new church guide book has been produced. The main event this year was an archaeological dig at North Hall Manor involving the school.

Church House and Land Charity/Educational Foundation – Rev'd Geoffrey Fenton

Rev'd Fenton explained that funds for the Educational Trust are generated from the surplus income from the four cottages in Dunstone which are owned and rented out by the church. After maintenance and improvements, half of the surplus goes to the Church and half goes to the Educational Foundation. This year, £500 has been given to individuals, £1000 to the school and £1000 to the Pre-school.

Church House – Di Cameron

Thanks to everyone for their continuing support for Church House. Financially, it has been a good year. A fee was paid by the BBC for using the hall which has provided a financial boost. The Church House has agreed to continue hosting the running events as the second event was much better organised than the first. Di wished to reassure everyone that if and when a new community hall is built, the Church House will continue to be open as a community building available to hire. The Committee has been in consultation with the National Trust about the installation of a disabled lift. Unfortunately, this has not been approved. The Committee is also discussing with them improvements to the heating and is waiting to receive a proposal from them. The Committee is keen to receive an answer by June so that if approved it can be

installed by next winter. A new fire alarm system has been put in place. Some hirers have had trouble with the lock on the front door. Keys will therefore be replaced.

Defibrillator – Judy Southcombe

Judy Southcombe was not present at the meeting but wished to remind the meeting that the defibrillator is located inside the bus shelter in the car park.

Widecombe Primary School – Des Stokes, headteacher

There are 73 children attending the school currently. One third come from out of the area. The birth rate indicates that there will be a decline in numbers in September. The school is very proud of how it nurtures the children. Last May, the school were very proud of its SATS results with 90% of the children achieving age related expectation and 100% achieving age-related expectations in maths. No children exceeded age-related expectation in maths, however, and there has been a push on maths this academic year.

The school continues to maintain its strong links with the church. It participates in the Christmas Tree Festival, Rev'd Fenton attends the school every fortnight for assemblies and the Year 6 leavers are allowed to climb the church tower.

The Reception/Year 1 class attends Forest school which the children thoroughly enjoy and Widecombe Fair is always enjoyed by the school. The school also takes part in the annual maypole dancing.

Widecombe Sailing Club – Daf Edwards

Widecombe Sailing club is a celebration of music and food. 3-4 musicians come each year and concerts, with food, are held in The Café on the Green. A concert is being held in the Church this summer and two regattas are planned. The winter regatta will be held in The Old Inn and the summer regatta (Ruggle Regatta) will be at the Rugglestone.

Widecombe Sports Group – Cllr Steve Morley (Member of Sports Group and Parish Council rep)

Cllr Morley advised that the sports facility was built in 1987 by volunteers. It has been used for a range of sports including hockey, tennis 5 a side football and boules. More recently, it is mostly used for tennis. When there are sufficient entrants, Wimblecombe tennis tournament is held during the summer. The court is flood lit and there is only a very small fee charged to play tennis. A new bench is arriving shortly. Help is needed to rejuvenate the rest of the play area which is tired and in need of repair. Membership levels are stable. It costs £12 per year to join or £25 for a family. A large expense which will have to be incurred relatively soon is the resurfacing of the tennis court. Further details about the sports group are on Widecombe's website. New ideas and new members are always welcomed.

Leusdon Memorial Hall – Norma Tempest

Leusdon Memorial Hall is used a wide assortment of groups including Leusdon Choir, a meditation group, badminton and whist. The coffee mornings and afternoon teas are well attended. Moorland Merrymakers held their annual pantomime in the hall and donated funds to purchase a defibrillator for the hall for which residents of Leusdon are very grateful. Over the past year, the hall steps have been rebuilt and we are grateful to the Parish Council for its grant. The boiler has unfortunately given up and we need to find £12,000-£14,000 for a new boiler.

Leusdon PCC – Rev'd Fenton

Rev'd Fenton drew the meeting's attention to the beautiful Bolitho memorial windows in Leusdon Church and the lovely building itself maintenance of which is hard work and expensive. He thanked the Parish Council for the grant it has given towards essential work at the top of the tower for which the Church is most grateful. The plough for Plough Sunday is being sand-blasted and will be dragged up the aisle like in Widecombe. Leusdon is a flourishing community which is very grateful for the support it receives.

Parish Link – Rev'd Fenton

The Parish Link is now available to download from Widecombe's website. Despite the editor's retirement in April, the Link will continue whilst a new editor is found.

Widcombe Website – Roger Claxton

Roger Claxton was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report regarding the parish website:

The Widcombe Website is twenty years old this year and has been providing topical and historical information on Widcombe for visitors and local people alike in all that time and has steadily grown its audience as the content has grown. We would like to thank everyone who has supported the site: the advertisers, the contributors and the helpers, and we look forward to continuing the development of the site.

Moor than Meets the Eye – Rev’d Geoffrey Fenton

£28,000 was granted to spend on improving the experience of visiting Widcombe. Signs have been erected in all establishments telling the story of Widcombe. 8 wax rubbing posts have also been erected around the village. Signs will go up in the pig house once the work is completed and a new church guide book is being produced.

Snow Warden - Miles Fursdon

Miles reported that he has a team of 60 volunteers. They are a fantastic team who help clear the roads when necessary.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

With regard to the new Community Hall, Richard Casey clarified that when seeking funding, it is important to demonstrate the amount of volunteer support. He advised that over 2000 hours of volunteer hours had already been given to this project. The Chairman expressed his thanks for the commitment shown by volunteers.

A resident of Lower Town thanked the community for welcoming him and his wife to the parish. He was not, however, in favour of increasing the precept for the purpose of raising money for a new Community Hall which will not be of benefit to everyone in the parish. He considers that due to political uncertainty, it is not the right time to move forward with a project like this and questioned whether proper thought has been given about the long-term ability to pay the loan back.

CLOSE

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed

Date

WIDECOMBE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2019 – CHAIRMANS REPORT

I would like to start this address with my thank yous:-

1. I wish to thank members of this Parish Council for the effort and time that they have put into supporting the Parish and the attendance rate is good. Sadly, there are three resignations this year – Judy Lomax, Judy Southcombe and myself. Both Judys have been tremendous support to the Council throughout their time with us. I myself have done 18 years and feel that I have done enough and there is another councillor who is younger and is very capable who is willing to take it on. The time is right for change now.
2. A big thank you to our clerk Suzanna Hughes for the work she has completed in connection with the Parish. Suzanna is a ‘professional’ clerk being clerk to 4 other parishes. This has proved very useful as she knows of the likely problems that we as a Council can face. With her training and experience she is also good at writing letters and has her contacts out there, which is useful.
3. I would also like to thank our County Councillor, George Gribble, and our District Councillor Mike Jeffrey. They put in a regular attendance at our Parish Council meetings, which is very useful as invariably questions are fired at them whenever they attend. George is of course a busy man with lots of budget meetings but he still finds the time and they both are generous in their funding when asked, such as with the defibrillator.
4. It has been reasonably non-eventful on the planning front this year, on which opinions from this council were cast and decisions from the local authority were made. Having said that, only at the last meeting an application for an ‘emergency services’ mast was lodged and discussed by the Council who objected to it.
5. Andrew operates the Post Office Outreach Centre which is essential to Widecombe and I would like to thank him sincerely for this on behalf of the Parish. I stress however that we as a community must support this facility and that means spending money there.
6. Repairs and maintenance around the village and in the Parish Field are ongoing. It must be understood that to be custodians of land is a responsibility that will cost money. The Parish Council has risk assessments in situ and inspections take place twice a year. This year there have been a tender for grazing the Parish field so the Parish Council has indeed decided to rent it out. Some new fencing is to be shortly constructed on the North boundary.
7. The state of the roads, (which as our County Councillor constantly reminds us extends in Devon to some 8000 miles worth), as always, has been causing some concern. We have and do try to get action and recently I have seen some large pot holes and grit was eventually delivered to Miles Fursden, our Snow Warden, who was a little aggravated over the delay but due to his effort and insistence we eventually got our re-supply quota. We have not really had any prolonged cold periods this Winter but our Snow Warden, Miles Fursden was there on alert. The Parish Council and Parish are very grateful to Miles for his efforts despite the aggravation he has had to endure.
8. Our school decided to enter Academy status some nine years ago now in conjunction with South Dartmoor Community College and other schools. The headteacher, Des Stokes, has assured me that whilst he is always on a steep learning curve and with support of those around him he has things under control. I am sure that he will enable our school to move forward with difficult times still facing us.
9. The heart defibrillator is in the bus shelter. The equipment has been purchased and should to be supported with a trained team and we are looking for volunteers for this task. I would like

to thank Councillor Judy Southcombe who has led this project so capably who will give a short address on the matter after this.

10. Last year the possibility for a new village hall was discussed and Yvette Elliot kindly stepped into the breach and agreed to look into carrying out a feasibility study. I believe some visits to new village halls in the area have and are taking place. Yvette, I believe, will speak shortly. On behalf of the community, thank you to Yvette for the hours of work she has put in to this project so far.
12. Councillor Tim Hassel has got a new communications system up and running within the Parish and the Parish Council. Thanks to both Cllr Hassell and Roger Claxton for their work on this.

As I state every year, at times like this I feel that we are so fortunate to live in such a beautiful and peaceful Parish that seems to go from strength to strength due to the efforts of all within. Thank you.

Rod Newbolt-Young,
(Chairman Widecombe Parish Council)
21st March 2019

WIDECOMBE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
FINANCIAL REPORT MARCH 2019

Balances held at March 2019

Current Account	£ 22,708
Deposit Account	£ 4,852
Total	£ 28,660

(NB. Parish Council is holding grant funds on behalf of Widecombe Village Hall Steering Group £12,656)

Balances held at end of previous financial years:

2018	£11,770
2017	£12,027
2016	£10,834
2015	£9,440
2014	£11,140
2013	£10,019
2012	£10,099
2011	£ 7,219

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Grants awarded in 2018/19

Leusdon PCC	£1000
St Pancras PCC	£300
Village Hall Steering Group	£300
Total	£1,600

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Major Sources of Income 2018/19

Precept & Council Tax support grant	£ 6,255
Letting of sites	£ 1,200
Grants/Donations	£15,656*
VAT reclaimed from 2016/17	£ 69
Total	£23,180

* Parish Council is holding grant funds on behalf of Widecombe Village Hall Steering Group £12,656)

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As I say every year, Widecombe Parish Council is excellent value for money compared with other parishes in the district. The weighted average Band D town or parish charge in Teignbridge for this year is £66.32. In Widecombe it is only £20.55.

The balance in the Parish Council's accounts at the end of this financial year will be around £16,000 which means we have very healthy reserves and there has been no need to increase the precept in the coming financial year.

Aside from the usual running costs of the Parish Council, there have been no big surprises in terms of spending requirements this year with the exception of some repairs to the Parish Field fencing, costing £855, with more required in the forthcoming year. This means that the Parish Council has been able to go over the budgeted amount of £1000 allocated to grants which benefit village organisations and has allocated £1600 this year. Whilst the small grant scheme has been advertised twice this year with grants being allocated in two rounds, September last year and March this year, the Parish Council only received applications from three organisations. This year applications were received from and grants were awarded to Widecombe PCC, Leusdon PCC and the Village Hall Steering Group. If your village group would benefit from some additional funding for a particular project, don't forget the small grants scheme. The Parish Council is always keen to support you to maintain this thriving community.

The Parish Council's account has been boosted by an unexpected windfall this year. It has been very fortunate to receive £3000 in filming fees from the BBC following 6 days filming for a new 6-part drama series coming out this year. For those who don't know, Gold Digger is about a 60-year old Devonshire lady who falls in love with a younger man from London much to the disapproval and consternation of her family and friends. Widecombe will be the Devonshire village outside of where the leading lady lives. The scenes involve the various comings and goings relating to the new couple walking through the village to surprised looks, window shopping, buying an engagement ring, staying in the pub and getting married in the local church. The release date is yet to be announced but definitely one to watch out for this year.

It will be helpful to have this additional funding to support some bigger expenditure next year. We are keeping our fingers crossed for an election but democracy comes at a cost and election costs could exceed £1000. We are also negotiating the renewal of the lease of North Hall field from DNPA and the sub-letting of that area to the Sports Group which means the Parish Council will incur legal fees drawing that up. The Parish Poll, to find out the views of parishioners about potentially increasing the precept to help with the cost of funding a new community hall which is planned for June. will also incur administrative costs and £1000 has been allocated to this. And as I said previously, more maintenance work is necessary in the Parish Field to repair fencing and look at the water supply.

As I always say, this is a snapshot of the Parish Council's finances. Audited accounts are published on the website should you wish to drill down further.