**Minutes of The Yarcombe Parish Council, Annual Parish Meeting,**

**held on Monday 21st May 2018 at 8pm**

**In the Jubilee Hall, Yarcombe**

**In Attendance:**

Cllrs N Randle (Chair), L Pidgeon, C Stone, A Long, D Barnes, Tony Wiggins, S Parris, S-J Martin (Clerk & RFO)

Members of the Public present – 15

**1. Welcome by Incoming Chairman**

* Cllr Nick Randle welcomed everyone to the Meeting as the outgoing Chair and, also the incoming Chair.

**2. Apologies**

* Apologies were given by Cllr Horner and Miranda Gudenian

**3. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2017**

* Cllr Randle advised the Minutes of the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting had been on the website for 12 months and that hopefully everyone had read them. He asked the attendees if everyone was happy for them to be signed off as a true and accurate record to which the response was yes.

**4. Police Report**

* The Police were unable to attend the meeting, but we received a report of 1 recent crime being a breach of bail conditions between 3rd March to 9th April and since then, no crimes were recorded.

**5. Retiring Chairman’s Report**

* Cllr Randle reported that, during the past Council year, the Parish Council has made particular efforts to interact directly with the community it is elected to serve. Early in the year we decided to focus, as far as possible on a different theme at each Council meeting. This approach was both aided and slightly overwhelmed by the coming into existence of the Yarcombe Inn Campaign, more to be said later. In July last year we held a focus on what we might do to enhance the environment. The Council has had a partnership with Devon County Council for many years to maintain the excellent network of footpaths in the Parish. Following a tender process, the council awarded a contract to a local contractor to undertake this work. The council has also made use of County funding to undertake additional work in clearing gullies and improving the experience of flooding in parts of the parish and particularly Moorhayne Lane. We also considered whether we might provide additional resource to keep the large verge at the entrance the Yarcombe tidy and to make improvements to the layby. The Council also plans to give thought to how the triangle of land owned by Yarcombe Estates which is opposite to the main church gate might be improved and made use of. In its budget for the coming year the Council allocated £1000 towards work on maintaining the environment.
* We invited officers from the county highways department to come to our meeting for a discussion of Highways issues in Yarcombe. Unfortunately, they declined our invitation. However, Cllrs Pidgeon and Barnes were able to attend an event run by the Highways department and to put questions to officers there. The County Council’s position has increasingly been that there is now insufficient funding to support the levels of maintenance that most would see as reasonable. This is a nationwide problem which is becoming increasingly evident year on year. We were therefore pleased to see the A30 resurfaced through Yarcombe during the year. On the other hand, Clifthayne `Lane was so degraded that Highways officers closed it for safety reasons. This has caused serious concern to users of the Lane and Councillors, Barnes, Horner and Stone have expended considerable effort in looking at options to restore it.
* Another of our focus points was to contact all the different groups that operate in Yarcombe and investigate whether there was any initiative that the Town Council could take which would improve their situation. The discussion was lively and interesting and provided much food for thought. We confirmed that the village hall was a key asset to Yarcombe and Marsh residents and that any action that will help improve the hall would be generally seen as beneficial. We also hope to have a focus on Youth at our next ordinary meeting.
* This year the community has sadly lost several of its number. Among those was the much loved and respected John Salter. Following the discussion with community groups it was agreed that the Parish Council would fund and support the John Salter award for volunteering in the community. Nominations were sought for those who best represented John’s exemplary volunteering spirit and the winner as voted by the Parish Council will be presented with a trophy and the council will donate £100 to a voluntary cause within the Parish nominated by the winner. The first winner will be presented with their award by Barbara Salter at the Parish Council meeting on 4th June.
* The issue which has most dominated the work of the Parish Council in this past year has been the campaign to secure the Yarcombe Inn as a hub for our community and the surrounding area. Shortly after the annual meeting last year the owners of the Yarcombe Inn announced that they planned to place it on the Market. The Parish Council had earlier applied to make the Yarcombe Inn an asset of community value which established a moratorium of 6 months in which the Parish Council was the only body who could purchase the inn. Following a lively public meeting in which it was unanimously agreed that the Parish Council should attempt to purchase the property a Council Committee consisting of 5 councillors and a number of other members of the community got to work. As well as fund raising, the campaign group developed an excellent business plan under the clear-thinking accountants eye of Denis Abel and envisaged a multi-use hub consisting of pub/café, bistro, meeting place, shop, bed and breakfast and Blackdown Hills visitor Centre. We have established a Yarcombe Inn Community Benefit Society which will operate the Inn, if and when we are able to take ownership of it. A community survey also took place which showed support from more than 90% of those responding for the vision that the committee had put forward. We also received much positive publicity in the local and regional media as a result of the efforts of Mervyn Edgecombe.
* Over the course of the summer funds were raised through a combination of crowd funding, loans and grants which meant that in October the Council was able to make an offer for the property which was consistent with the valuation that we had received. The owners of the Inn however had a significantly different idea of the value and were still hopeful of making greater gains from the property as a result of a change of use. The Council felt that while it will oppose a change of use for the property it should also avoid purchasing the Inn by taking on negative equity and therefore decided to await developments. We left our offer on the table and accepted that there was a chance that someone might make a slightly higher offer to purchase and operate the Inn for its designated purpose. In that case we would be happy to work with them to make the enterprise a success.
* The Inn has been on the Market for a year now and we note that the owners have just reduced their asking price. We also note that the campaign for the Kings Arms in Stockland has just successfully taken ownership of it at a substantially lower price that originally asked, which demonstrates our current offer for the Yarcombe Inn to be entirely reasonable. The campaign committee has recently met to agree further actions and we will continue to seek an appropriate outcome at the earliest possible opportunity.
* Apart from the Councillors on the committee and the community members I have already mentioned I would like to recognise the voluntary contribution of Ruth Marshalsea our retail advisor, Will Tyzack our legal brain, Peter Tarrant our web developer and Jon Stockwell who among other things created the campaign banners at the entrance to the village which have kept the campaign in everyone’s mind.
* I would also pay tribute to all Parish Councillors who it has been my privilege to work with as Chairman over the past 12 months. They are Lesley Pidgeon, David Barnes, Tony Long, Tony Wiggins, Steve Horner, Maggie Tomkinson, Clive Stone and Sue Parris. They are an outstanding team and I truly believe that Yarcombe and Marsh have been very well served by them not only in the last year but in all the years since this council was elected. We are also so ably supported by Sarah Jane Martin as Parish Clerk. Her work at the heart of the Council allows us to be greater than the sum of our parts for which we thank her.
* This is the last year of office for this Council and new elections will take place in 12 month’s time for the next 4-year period. If any member of the community feels they can do a better job than this lot then now is the time to start thinking about whether you wish to stand. It may be the vacancies naturally arise, or it may, as at the last election that there are more candidates than seats (a very healthy situation) but if you need to know more about being a Parish Councillor do please get in touch. Local government is changing rapidly and the work of Parish Councils is becoming ever more important. It’s a real opportunity to serve and to try to make a difference. Thank you.

Cllr Randle asked the Parishioners if they had any questions and Liz Freeman advised the lane near her house had recently been re-surfaced and it was now the best it had ever been so is delighted.

**6. Planning Report**

* Cllr Long gave a report on local planning over the last 12 months of which we had 23 applications to process, holding site meetings and responding back to East Devon DC. Of these were 16 Full applications, 1 Agricultural building, 2 Listed building consents, 1 Certificate of lawful use, 1 Ancillary Accommodation, 1 Overhead Line and 1 Outline Planning Consent application. Of these applications, 15 went on to get full approval, 5 are awaiting decisions and 3 were refused.
* Our current work in progress involves working with EDDC and our neighbouring Parish Councils with our Neighbourhood Plans to help encourage the new Agricultural buildings to be more integrated within their surroundings with colour materials and screening.
* The Chair asked if there were any questions for Tony to which Matthew Tomkinson asked if concerns over commercial lights come into planning. Cllr Long responded that the lights in question are in the Membury parish and Cllr Randle added our Neighbourhood Plan does have a “Dark Sky Policy”.
* There are also concerns about the security light at the Yarcombe Inn which is intrusive to local residents and another on the entrance to the village.

Resolved – Clerk to add the topic of our Dark Sky Policy topic into the June Agenda for discussion.

**7. Roads Report**

* Cllr Barnes reported on the continuous problem with potholes and that the Council’s policy of not filling them until they are large is a real problem. We have had ideal weather over the last few weeks to fill in the pot holes, but no-one has been out to do any. We have tried contacting John Hart about the issue, but the response always comes back that there are not enough funds. The worst area is still Clifthayne Lane and was closed as there was another road for access but now this other road is quickly deteriorating. He emphasised to the Parishioners we are doing our best, but it can be like knocking our heads against a brick wall.
* Cllr Randle asked if there were any questions:

Liz Freeman said a big thank you to everything that has been done and Cllr Randle responded that the roads are our biggest headache.

Brian Smith advised the recently resurfaced A30 is already starting to lift in patches and Cllr Barnes thinks it is the sub-standard materials used and that is was done in bad weather. Philip Bearne has noticed yellow markings along the A30 as if they are going to come back and do some more work.

Resolved – Clerk to email highways to advise the A30 is lifting in areas.

**8. Parish Paths Report**

Cllr Tomkinson read out the following report:

* The work has continued this year to improve our footpaths. In the summer of last year, the parish council appointed George Pidgeon to undertake the work that had been identified, including installing some new double gates and stiles as well as improving signage. The majority of this has now been completed with just one more complex job in the planning. More path work continues to be identified and with the cold winter we anticipate that we will need to apply again this year for additional funding to replace some more stiles.
* Apart from the regular work of keeping the paths in good condition there are two things that have come to my attention more recently this year. The first is the amount of litter that is left on the paths. On walking some of the paths you can easily pick up at least one large bin liner full of rubbish. This is sad for the appearance of our parish, bad for the environment and in some cases could be dangerous for the livestock on the land.
* The second issue is that of walkers leaving gates open, we hear of this happening every year and this can lead to farm stock getting loose and destroying crops or wandering onto roads. It appears impossible to track the guilty parties and the farmer or land owner is left to foot any bill that might result from damage. It is difficult to know what do to prevent this, though farmers have asked that the EDDC should cover this on their insurance rather than on their own, this is a discussion to be taken forward. One unfortunate remedy to this is the replacement of the beautiful old wooden farm gates with modern metal double gates, which we continue to do. Also, better signage with basic country code instructions might help. Since we have found that there is little appropriate signage available through the P3 EDDC we will be discussing with the council ways of creating appropriate signage to encourage walkers respect the countryside.
* As always I would like to remind everyone that if you have a problem with a gate or stile which is on a footpath on your land you can be in touch with me and we will try to find a solution which works for everyone. Equally if you see a problem on a footpath or something that needs renewing please be in touch. Generally, the parish or the district council can fund any replacement of gates or improvements to footpaths, though bigger improvements can take some time to undertake.
* Again this year I would like to take this opportunity to mention by name all the path wardens who take time to walk and report on the paths every year - David Barnes, David and Thelma Clark, David Clithero, Janice Evans, Tony & Helen Long, Helen Matthews, Heather Newman, George Pidgeon, Graham Wadey, John Tony Wiggins Woolham, Carol Wyatt and especially Steve Horner who continues to assist on paths matters. If anyone would like to join our team of wardens please do let me know, we have many beautiful paths to walk!

Following Cllr Tomkinson’s report, we talked about signage and Clerk is to have a look at any that we might be able to use.

**9. Charity Report**

* A report was provided on the Longcroft Meadow Parochial Charity that receives rent from the Longcroft Meadow which has been distributed since the 16th century and continues to be. The funds have historically been distributed to the Intelligent Poor whereas now this is interpreted to those in higher education and some grants have been provided to older people within the Community. We work with the Church to over sea the charitable giving. There is a possibility of a land swap within the village, but this still remains in the early stages of discussions.

**10. District & County Councillor Reports**

* Cllr Diviani had sent a recent report which detailed meeting he had attended and the County Councillor wasn’t in attendance.

**11. Residents Forum and Open Discussion**

* Cllr Randle opened the meeting up to discussion of local issues and matters of concern.
* Lesley Sutton raised the issue of the layby which is a mess as it wasn’t cut well by the Council and had been previously kept in very god condition. Cllr Randle advised we are looking to spend a small amount and get the area cut more regularly.
* Additionally, Lesley said that on behalf of the Royal Wedding Street Party, we would like to thank the Parish Council very much for the celebratory Pimm’s.

**12. Announcement of the Nominees of the John Salter Award with the presentation to the Winner on Monday 4th June.**

* The Chair advised that the Parish Council tool it on board and implemented the award to encourage volunteering in the Community. It was noted that The Young Farmers had recently done some volunteering work in the village. The award was originally to be tonight, but we would like Barbara Salter to present it. As Barbara is currently on holiday we have postponed the presentation until Monday 4th June.

The Nominees and a summary of their nominations for the Award are as follows:

**Miranda**

* For her dedication and exceptional hard work and community spirit in producing and editing Yarcombe Voices for 20 years and more recently eVoices, the village email link to keep us in touch with the latest news in telephone scams, lost dogs, Gigaclear road closures etc. Miranda is the very embodiment of community volunteering in a way which benefits the whole of Yarcombe and Marsh

**Barbara Salter**

* Since her marriage to John in 1960 she has been an essential part of village life, organising or assisting hundreds of events and activities.  She cares for this community as John did, devotedly and diligently.

**Julie Rich**

* Julie works very hard for the flower show and children’s committee and is so very full of enthusiasm and good ideas.

**Lesley Pidgeon**

* Lesley has worked tirelessly for the village for years, and I have never known Lesley to be in a bad mood, her energy levels are amazing, and I know she both helps organise and run many village events whilst also quietly helping individuals if ever they have a need.

**Maggie Lane**

* Maggie has given her services for a number of years in helping to create a voluntary music group in Yarcombe. `She ran Maggie’s men for a number of years that morphed into Maggie’s mix and then developed the All Sorts musical instrument ensemble. Maggie as a skilled musician who shares music with everyone regardless of their ability. She supports charitable events and makes music accessible to anyone and everyone.

**Helen Parris**

* For all her hard work as Hall Secretary as she has taken on the role with great gusto and has thrown herself into the role with enthusiasm and commitment not only with the admin and paperwork side of the role but in a very practical way as well.

**David Little**

* For climbing the church clock every few days and doing intricate things to the clock to keep it ticking over.

Cllr Randle stated these nominations are a worthy selection to which Liz Freeman added it is wonderful indication of our Community Spirit.

Cllr Randle asked if there were any further comments and Philip Beane just wanted to add a note about the Community Land Trust in that they are still struggling to find suitable land although there is an area in Marsh. The Government has put more money into affordable housing which will generate funds for the build.

The Chair asked the Councillors if there was anything else they would like to ask. None of the Councillors had anything else to raise and the Chair the then thanked everyone for being here.

The next meeting is Monday 4th June at 8pm. This will be preceded by a meeting with the youngsters of the village with hot dogs at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.