

Minutes of Holt Annual Parish Meeting
Held Thursday 14th March 2024 at Holt Village Hall 7:30pm

Item	
	<p>Attendance</p> <p>Cllr Geoff Chopping Cllr Jonathan Cutts (Chairman of the Parish Council) Cllr Jackie Egan Cllr Peter Finney Cllr Geoff Pike Cllr Guy Reynolds (Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council) Cllr Janet Wallace Cllr Sarah Weaver Mrs Lisa Goodwin (Clerk to the Parish Council) Cllr Robin Cook (Dorset Councillor Stour & Allen Vale Ward) 37 members of public.</p>
01	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed those present including Cllr Robin Cook and residents from Furzehill.</p>
02	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Cllr Wrettham Ladbrooke-Chartres Ralph & Celia Moore Cllr Val Potheary (Chair Dorset Council) Sara & John Turnbull</p>
04	<p>Good Citizen Award 2024</p> <p>The Parish Council is pleased to present the 2024 Good Citizen Award to Mr Bill Warren. Bill is Chairman of the Holt Area Neighbourcare and a volunteer driver. Bill has helped raise funds for the Parish Hall giving a talk on beekeeping and is a volunteer on the Holt Community Speed Watch Team. Bill was nominated for his active interest in the community, in addition to the support he gives to his neighbours. The Chairman presented Bill with a certificate and voucher for Stewarts Garden Centre.</p> <p>There were no nominations for the Youth Award this year.</p>

<p>05</p>	<p>Confirm the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held 17th March 2023</p> <p>It was resolved unanimously that the minutes of the last meeting held 17th March 2023 were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chairman.</p>
<p>06</p>	<p>Matters Arising from the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting</p> <p>None.</p>
<p>07</p>	<p>Annual Report of the Parish Council by the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Guy Reynolds</p> <p>As with any other year, your Council has continued to work hard on your behalf to ensure Holt continues to thrive and be a pleasant place to live and work. All Councillors are volunteers and give of their time for the greater good of the Parish and I would like to thank them all for their diligence and enthusiasm in their duties.</p> <p>There are, as ever, a considerable number of individuals to pass our thanks on to for their help over the past year and indeed often many years. First and foremost, let me pass on the thanks of the Council to Celia Moore. Celia stood down recently after serving on the Council for 15 years, which is a considerable amount of meetings to attend. Celia has been a great asset to the Council, bringing local knowledge and considered opinion to many a topic and we are most grateful. In addition to this, we would also like to thank Celia and her husband Ralph for all their efforts in overseeing the Cemetery, ensuring the bins were put out and keeping everything in order. On that note, thanks is also extended to Charlie Hiscock, Mike Clifford and Ian Mulliner for their help at the Cemetery, it continues to be a beautifully kept space for remembrance and peaceful contemplation. Thank you to Ian for taking over the bin duties as well, it is much appreciated.</p> <p>Another space within the village that is kept in a very neat and tidy condition is the Village Green, which is a lovely open area for all to enjoy. Limecove do a super job keeping it neat throughout the year and we are grateful for all their efforts on our behalf.</p> <p>Our telephone boxes within the Parish may no longer serve as communication devices, but they are still community assets. Several enthusiastic parishioners help keep them in tip top condition and the Council wishes to thank Peter Finney, Les Gordon and Richard Lonsdale for their help repairing and maintaining our boxes. Thanks to Richard as well for his help in statistical analysis of our speed indicator devices used within the village. I should also extend our gratitude to Matrod Frampton, who kindly installed the replacement phone box in Holtwood after the previous incumbent was so unceremoniously removed. The replacement box has been very sturdily installed and any invoice for the works has been conspicuous in its absence, so a very warm thank you to the Matrod Frampton team for their generous efforts in reinstating a local feature.</p>

The village is well served for public spaces and we are lucky to have both a Village and Parish Hall to make use of. Thank you to both the Village Hall and Parish Hall Committees, who work hard to ensure both buildings remain viable and open for use. Ann Korta warrants a special mention for her work in respect of the Parish Hall together with the wider Committee, and also for organising the Neighbourcare Transport Scheme, along with a team of volunteers, helping Parishioners attend important appointments when they need to.

Many of you will have noticed the ongoing maintenance of the road signage within the Parish. We have refurbished the finger posts at Pheasants Rise, Broadbridge and God's Blessing Green, with helpful additional funding from the CPRE. We also thank members of the Parish Council for getting out within the Parish and diligently cleaning many of our road signs by hand. Cleaning of road signage has been a victim of budget rationalising in recent years and is no longer undertaken by the County Council. Your Parish Councillors have taken it upon themselves to fill the void and are doing a wonderful job.

In a similar vein, the Parish Council jointly funded the replacement of the notice board in Gaunts Common, together with Vale of Allen Parish Council. The new notice board is a considerable improvement and looks superb. I hope you all approve of the choice of green, the shade of which was the topic of considerable debate!

The Parish Council continues to distribute public funds to worthwhile projects and organisations. £500 was granted to the Citizens Advice Bureau for East Dorset, which continues to be a well-used local asset. A grant of £200 was given to the Coronation celebrations. The Parish Council also funded the purchase of a specialised defibrillator cabinet for St James' School.

The Parish Council has welcomed a new member in Geoff Pike and we look forward to his valuable input over the coming year. Councillor Sarah Weaver deserves a particular mention as Rights of Way officer. Together with the indomitable Kiri, Sarah regularly walks many miles across the Parish inspecting the footpaths, bridleways and byways and has been a whirlwind of restorative activity, with signage reinstated, stiles repaired, bridges rebuilt and undergrowth cleared. The whole Parish is more accessible as a result and we owe her a debt of thanks. We would offer to join her, but we're not sure we could keep up.

Our erstwhile Chairman continues to steer a steady course and we are most grateful for his wise leadership. As well as helping with the Community Speedwatch team, our Chair also sits on the St Margarets and Stones Almshouses Committee as the representative for Holt. Together with Peter Finney he has also spearheaded the Highways working group, which has enjoyed considerable success. Thank you Jonathan.

Although the Parish Council is responsible for myriad local tasks within the Parish, two issues dominate our time and caseload: Planning and Traffic.

The Parish Council have commented on 44 planning applications this year, some of which are contentious and absorb a considerable amount of time. Meetings have run as late as 10pm as a result of planning discussions. The Council always approach applications from a neutral position and all comments are reasoned and impartial. We have a responsibility to try and allow responsible and sympathetic development within the Parish at the same time as respecting the views of residents, not always a straightforward task. We continue to invite all Parishioners to attend meetings to air their views on Planning applications relevant to them.

Road traffic, both in terms of speed and volume, is a constant issue within the Parish. We are all too aware of the issues surrounding the use of the wider Parish as a cut through to other more major roads and we have several initiatives in place to help counter the effects. We have an active Community Speedwatch Group that has received comprehensive training and continues to deploy on a regular basis to record speed violations within the village, often alongside regular police enforcement units. We have had numerous occasions where excessive speed has been observed and the individuals receive official police attention as a result, with the hope they modify their behaviour. In addition to this, we have purchased another Speed Indicator Device, known as SID to his friends, which continues to be stationed around the Parish to help dissuade drivers from speeding. Alongside this initiative, we have enjoyed considerable success over the past year in our approach to the Highways Department and a re-evaluation of speed limits within the Parish. As a result, we are delighted to report that on the back of patient negotiation and sustained evidence collection, we have obtained a reduction in the speed limits in sections of road at Horseshoes Crossroads, Holt Road and Holt Lane. I would like to emphasise that these are locations we were originally advised we would be highly unlikely to obtain any changes, so it is of considerable significance and as a result of the hard work of your Parish Council that we have managed such a successful result. We hope that the limits will be respected and drivers recognise the inherent risks of inappropriate speed.

Two public servants deserve a final mention for their work in support of the Parish Council. Firstly, our thanks is extended to Robin Cook, our County Councillor. Councillor Cook is always most supportive of the Parish Council and has helped us get our voice heard at higher levels on numerous occasions. In addition to this, he regularly attends our meetings, often in inclement weather conditions through the Winter months, to ensure we are up to date with the latest from County Hall.

Last but by no means least, our eternal gratitude must be expressed to our Clerk, Lisa Goodwin. It is no exaggeration to say that the learned Clerk is the lynchpin which holds all things together and we are under no illusion that effort is extended above and beyond her remit to ensure we are as successful and efficient as we can be. An extraordinary amount of work takes place to make the Parish Council function and we are most grateful.

Voting takes place in May for your Parish Council for the next electoral term. I urge you to make use of your vote to ensure the representatives you desire to see making decisions on your behalf are in place.

08	<p>Matters arising from the Annual Report.</p> <p>None.</p>
09	<p>Audited Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2023</p> <p>The audited accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023 were displayed for members of the public to view and have been available to view on the parish council website. www.holtparishcouncil.org.uk</p>
10	<p>Annual Report from Cllr Robin Cook, Dorset Councillor for Stour & Allen Vale Ward</p> <p>This report is a summary of some of the 2023 headlines from Dorset Council which I hope you will find of interest. I don't expect to take long as you have a much more interesting speaker to follow! I am, as ever, happy to discuss more detail with residents outside of this meeting.</p> <p>Planning issues and highway matters, take up more of my inbox than any other subject. Some interesting facts – in 2023, similar to 2022, nearly 50% of planning applications were for Holt parish, the remaining 50% spread among the other six parishes in my ward, so as you can imagine this generates a high level of queries and concerns from residents.</p> <p><u>Council budget</u></p> <p>Dorset Council's budget of £377 million for the financial year 2024-25 was approved by councillors at the full council meeting on 13th February 2024. This continues the council's commitment to maintain frontline services, without the need for cuts to balance the budget. The budget setting exercise once again took place against a national background of extreme pressures for councils. These pressures include the high-level of inflation which affects the cost of delivering council services, and also the continued growth in need for services that we provide to some of our most vulnerable residents. Dorset Council provides around 450 different services to just under 380,000 residents.</p> <p>While Dorset Council is not in the same financial position as many other councils across the UK, council tax will increase next year by just under 3 per cent and the adult social care precept by 2 per cent. The increase is equivalent to £1.82 extra per week for a Band D property. We have developed this balanced budget in a national context of significant financial challenge. Our overriding aim is to protect the essential frontline council services on which local residents and businesses rely.</p> <p>The government has listened to our calls for more funding which have resulted in £3.9 million additional funding for Dorset Council as part of the settlement. This extra funding helps us protect valued frontline services in the short-term. However, like councils nationally, we still face a challenging financial position in future years.</p>

Since becoming a unitary council in 2019, we have made efficiency savings of £96 million. This money has been reinvested to protect frontline services, including funding the growing need for adult social care with our ageing population. Our prudent budget management has meant that Dorset has not faced the same cuts to essential services as many other areas.

We will continue to lobby Government for fairer funding for Dorset so that we can reduce the burden on local taxpayers in future.

2024/2025 - Dorset Council sources of funding



Highways

As I reported last year, I have continued to work with your parish council on addressing highway and traffic issues which are of a major concern to many residents. Due to the parish councils efforts and with my support I am pleased that we have achieved some initial successes including speed limit reductions in certain hotspots. These may only be small wins but I am confident we will see other initiatives coming into play. I certainly intend to keep the pressure up as long as I am in a position to so do.

Election year

It may have escaped your notice that 2024 is an election year. What we don't yet know is when the general election will be, but we do know that May 2nd brings us local elections. This includes Dorset Council plus town and parish councils within that area. In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner's post is up for grabs on the same day.

I give you notice now that I have been selected to stand for the Stour and Allen Vale ward again, having been your ward councillor for the last five years since Dorset Council was formed. It has been a privilege and I have been very proud to represent this lovely part of our county. I have number of projects that I am working on in different parish areas and hope that you will give me the opportunity to continue these after May 2nd.

Cllr Robin Cook, Stour & Allen Vale Ward

cllrobin.cook@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

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Public Questions

Mr Wilson-Croome, thanked the Parish Council for welcoming Furzehill residents and to Cllr Geoff Chopping for driving the boundary change through. **Mr Wilson-Croome wished to ask the Parish Council to re-consider the use of a Speed Indicator Device on Smugglers Lane which is now a 40mph limit and as a site for the Community Speed Watch.**

The Chairman responded that highway issues in Furzehill will be considered by the Parish Council Highways Working Group. Cllr Peter Finney added that the Parish Council would have to ask Dorset Council to assess and approve a new location for a Speed Indicator Device.

Mr Lockhart is concerned with the number of heavy lorries using the rural roads through Holt and Furzehill that have increased over the last 2/3 years servicing the new building works on the Cranborne Road. **Would it be possible to implement a 7.5 tonne limit on Holt Road at Mannington and at Furzehill to prevent this as it is unreasonable for these size lorries to be using rural roads?**

Cllr Finney responded that this is something that could be discussed with the Dorset Council Highways Team, the Chairman added that this is a good point and explained the Parish Council has very constructive dialogue with Dorset Council.

Cllr Robin Cook explained that the difficulty is with HGV drivers using personal SATNAV's for directions which is difficult to resolve. Lorries are supposed to use specific routes as agreed with the Developers Construction Plan, signage is placed around Wimborne and lorries can be reported to both Dorset Council and Dorset Police if they are not adhering to this.

The Chairman encouraged residents to report any incidents or near misses directly to Dorset Council via their website, this will help build a picture of where there are problems.

Mr Nigel Allman has spoken with the Site Manager for the Cranborne Road developments who advised they have no control over suppliers.

Mr Allman also asked about the vacant former East Dorset Council Offices.

Cllr Robin Cook agreed this has been quite a saga to sell the property with difficulties over land ownership and probate that needed to be resolved. A question was asked if it could be re-purposed if unable to sell as it must have cost Dorset Council a lot of money. Cllr Robin Cook explained it is now more urgent to sell and asked residents to contact him directly for more information.

Mr Curtis suggested that with any new development of the site, the road surface should be improved as part of the permission.

<p>Mr Brian Holloway, a former resident of Holt asked about the future of the graves in Holt St James Church which is believed to be sold (subject to contract).</p> <p>The Chairman explained that the Parish Council is in dialogue with the Diocese and have been advised they have chosen which bids to recommend to the Commissioners for acceptance. Once this has been approved, a public consultation will be held about the future of the church and its contents. The Parish Council will seek more clarity for residents.</p> <p>Mr John Cardell is concerned that neighbours are no longer notified by letter of planning applications that may affect them, this can now only be found out by checking on-line. Cllr Robin Cook noted this concern.</p>

The Chairman closed the meeting at 20:28 and introduced the Guest Speaker,
Charlie North Lewis, Director of the Tivoli Theatre

These minutes are to be signed by the Chairman after approval at the next Annual Parish Meeting.

Signed;..... Date:.....

DRAFT