



QUEEN CAMEL PARISH COUNCIL

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***Draft* Minutes of Queen Camel Parish Council Annual Village Meeting held on Friday, 17th May 2024 at 18.45 pm**

Prior to the formal opening of the meeting the Countess Gytha School choir entertained the audience with three songs.

John Brendon (JB) as chairman of the Parish Council (PC) presided over the meeting and welcomed some 150 parishioners. He said that this was not a PC meeting, but was one for information to be shared and for the public to express their views on matters affecting the village. He put a particular emphasis on two themes which he expected to come out of the meeting: communications and volunteering.

JB then introduced the outside speakers:

Ed Benbow. As head of Hazlegrove School Ed appreciated being invited, particularly as he had attend Countess Gytha School as a child and knew the area well. He shared some of the cultural activities that take place at Hazlegrove and would ensure information was made available so that villagers could attend.

David Gordon. As head of Countess Gytha School David reported on the significant progress that has been made in the last few years so that the school is now rated with a Good performance and is in the top 500 primary schools in England at number [47] As well as the academic achievements he put emphasis on bring out the best in all children

Dr Daniel Edmonds. Dr Edmonds reported on the significant work being done at the surgery to enhance the dispensary so that it was much more automated. This is nearly completed. He also summarised the various changes in the medical team, but observed that the practice, unlike many, had been able to recruit the right professional staff. He also thanked the village for acting responsibly in their demands of their doctors. This had allowed the practice to continue to flourish unlike many others.

Henry Hobhouse. Henry reported on the difficult situation Somerset Council (SC) is in financially with a very heavy financial burden to support those in need of care and for children with special educational needs. These two factors have left SC with very little resource to deal with all the other statutory services it has to provide. Nevertheless Henry has been pursuing the flooding and road issues which affect the village.

Sarah Dyke MP. Sarah gave a resume of her first 10 months as our MP. She mentioned her efforts to support adequate public transport in the county by ensuring bus services are maintained and by campaigning for the opening of a railway station for Somerton and Langport. On education she explained that SC had less control as many schools had become academy trusts. On local government funding she explained the problem for Somerset but did not offer any solutions.

JB thanks all the outside speakers and the organisers of the meeting. He also drew attention to the displays in the Marples Room by the Cleaveside Community Centre, the Bowls Club, the Cricket Club and the Balsam Centre (youth club). JB then went on to introduce the speakers from village clubs and organisations:

Phil Jones. Phil reported on the **Communications** efforts he has been leading with the WhatsApp groups and how the numbers using this have grown. He referred the efforts to increase the distribution of The Camels magazine by email rather than hard copy.

Phil also publicly unveiled the approved plans for the new **Play Area** which will be installed this summer, thanks in a large part to The National Lottery funding which in turn is dependent on the public buying tickets; the village is effectively getting a return for its lottery purchases.

Martin Lilley. Martin reported on the activities of the **Flood Committee** working with the various agencies in helping the recovery from last year's flood through greater resilience and much improved warning systems. Martin raised a concern of how to ensure, if a flood warning was needed, how to communicate the warning to all who might be affected.

Steve Millard. Steve reported on the recovery of Rosemary Heath-Coleman, the Chair of the CLT, from major heart surgery. He also noted that the main buildings on the **Old School** were now back in action after the flood and were fully occupied. The CLT has agreed its insurance claim following the flood and is about to embark with a specialist firm on making the Victorian and 1920s buildings secure from floods. The CLT will also now be able to consider what to do with the other structures which suffered from the flood. It was noted that the gardens continue to flourish.

Sue Gettings. Sue gave a very detailed report on the **Cleaveside Community Centre** and how it supports residents and outsiders with activities, which are publicised in The Camels. both on site and with trips in the area.

Angus Davidson. Angus reported on the **Playing field Committee's** activities, with the need for more volunteers and for important decisions to be made regarding storage space and considering a replacement for the pavilion. He touch on the opportunities to expand the playing field area in due course.

Tony Green. Tony outlined the social and physical health benefits that bowls can give to all ages. The club is rebuilding its membership numbers and would welcome new joiners.

Marian Davis. Marian was unable to attend as she had just gone into hospital. JB gave a very brief overview of the Tennis Club, the Bumps, Tots & Toddlers Group and the Camel Club.

Rachel Scully. Rachel reported on the **Memorial Hall** which is extensively used by the village for activities, noting that some redecoration will take place soon to maintain its standard. She also appealed for new members to join its committee.

Jackie Drake. Jackie reported on the Gardening Club and its activities, particularly in providing encouragement with plant and bake sales.

JB thanked the speakers and then opened the meeting to general comments.

John Corbett raised the question of the **condition of the playing field approach**, with its car parks, the Green Lane track and its general appearance. He urged that the PC get this attended to and use some of the Community Benefit Fund money for this. Whilst this view received support it was also noted that the village, in consultation with the PC, needs to decide whether all the CBF money is spent in this area. There were also differing views expressed on whether dogs should be banned from the playing field and whether the new play area should be fully fenced off or not. JB said that the PC expected to deal with these matters once the new play area is completed. He also reminded the meeting that dogs should

always be on leads in the playing field and their mess picked up at all times.

After this discussion JB closed the formal part of the meeting, thanking all the speakers and everyone for attending.

Signed

(Chairman)

Date