



West Monkton Parish Council

2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT

Who we are

West Monkton Parish Council (WMPC) is made up of nine Parish Councillors and a team of two Clerks who are all passionate about our local area.

West Monkton Parish Councillors:



Cllr Stuart Haskins

Chairman

stuart.haskins@westmonkton.net



Cllr Alan Hall

Vice Chairman

Member responsible for Water Resilience and Maidenbrook Country Park

alan.hall@westmonkton.net



Cllr Barry Gage

Chairman of Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH) Committee and member responsible for footpaths

barrygage@westmonkton.net



Cllr Hazel Ellis

Spital Trust representative and member of the BACH Committee

hazel.ellis@westmonkton.net



Cllr Mark Besley

Member responsible of Highways

mark.besley@westmonkton.net



Cllr Geoff Hope

Member responsible for Public Open Space, Recreation and Children's Play Areas and member of the BACH Committee

geoff.hope@westmonkton.net



Cllr Paul Elliston

Member responsible Community Liaison and Transportation and member of the BACH Committee

paul.elliston@westmonkton.net



Cllr Ray Tully

Member responsible for Safe Routes to School and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), member of the BACH Committee and WM Village Hall representative.

Ray.tully@westmonkton.net

West Monkton Parish and Somerset Council Councillor:



Cllr Norman Cavill

Member responsible for Water Resilience and LGR and member of the BACH Committee and Somerset Council Councillor

normancavill@westmonkton.net

Somerset Council Councillor:



David Fothergill – Somerset County Council (SCC)

Councillor for Monkton and North Curry Division.

Leader of the Council

djafothergill@somerset.gov.uk

Parish Council Clerks:



Amy Shepherd - Clerk

clerk@westmonkton.net



Kate Welsh – Assistant Clerk (Community)

community@westmonkton.net

What WMPC does

WMPC works collaboratively with members of the community and partners to deliver our vision and objectives for the Parish, going over and above what is expected from a Parish Council.

Our Vision for West Monkton

Our vision is for WMPC and the local community to work together to protect and improve the social, recreational and environmental well-being of West Monkton and the lives of all who live, visit and work here.

Our Priorities and Objectives

WMPC has agreed priorities and objectives, focused on Our Environment, Community and the Parish Council.

What WMPC has achieved in 2022/23

Our Environment

Worked towards making the parish of West Monkton more carbon neutral by 2030 by:

- Enabling the planting of trees in the parish. 100 trees, 25 specimen trees and 700 shrubs (in the Forest School area) have been planted in Maidenbrook Country Park (MCP) during 2022/23. Nearly 4000 trees have been planted so far at the MCP. 190 trees were also planted in the Monkton Heathfield phase 1 development and 80 Cherry Trees were planted to create the Queen's Jubilee Platinum Walk along Dyers Brook.
- In partnership with Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, delivered a wildlife pond and Forest School at MCP.
- Continued to deliver a hi-vis initiative to encourage children to cycle and walk to school safely. More than 100 hi-vis jackets have been given to school children so far.
- Explored locations for the provision of electric vehicle charging points in the Parish.
- Promoted public transport that is available in the Parish.
- Delivered seed swap events in the Parish in October 2022 and March 2023.
- Continued enquiries and conducted a survey about delivering a community transport scheme for the Parish.
- Commenced enquiries about providing electric bikes to loan to members of our Community.
- Provided grant funding for individuals and organisations for Climate Change projects based in the parish.
- Promoted recycling and reusing in the Parish by producing and sharing a 'Reduce, reuse, recycle - what is available to me locally' document.
- Delivered a clothing collection for charity event.
- Delivered toy swap event.
- Delivered a Sunflower Growing Competition.
- Delivered two Farm Walks.

Our Community

- Delivered the Community Fridge
- Recruited in excess of 65 volunteers in the community to support community projects.
- Delivered a community picnic.
- Provided a weekly community café on Wednesdays from 2.30pm until 4pm at the BACH.
- Provided weekly Stay and Play Groups on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning at the BACH.
- Carried out regular litter picks with volunteers in the community

- Delivered successful community events to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee
- Delivered a monthly community quiz at Tacchi Morris.
- Delivered a Community Live Music Night at Tacchi Morris.
- Continued to provide a Community Website – www.monktonmatters.co.uk
- Improved existing footpaths through the installation of new gates and stiles on Public Rights of Way across the Parish
- Provided grant funding to charitable, small and local groups to deliver goods or services for the benefit of members of the community in the Parish.
- Provided a Warm Hub at the BACH during the colder winter months.
- With the help of a volunteer provided cooked meals over the Christmas period for those who needed them.

Our Parish Council

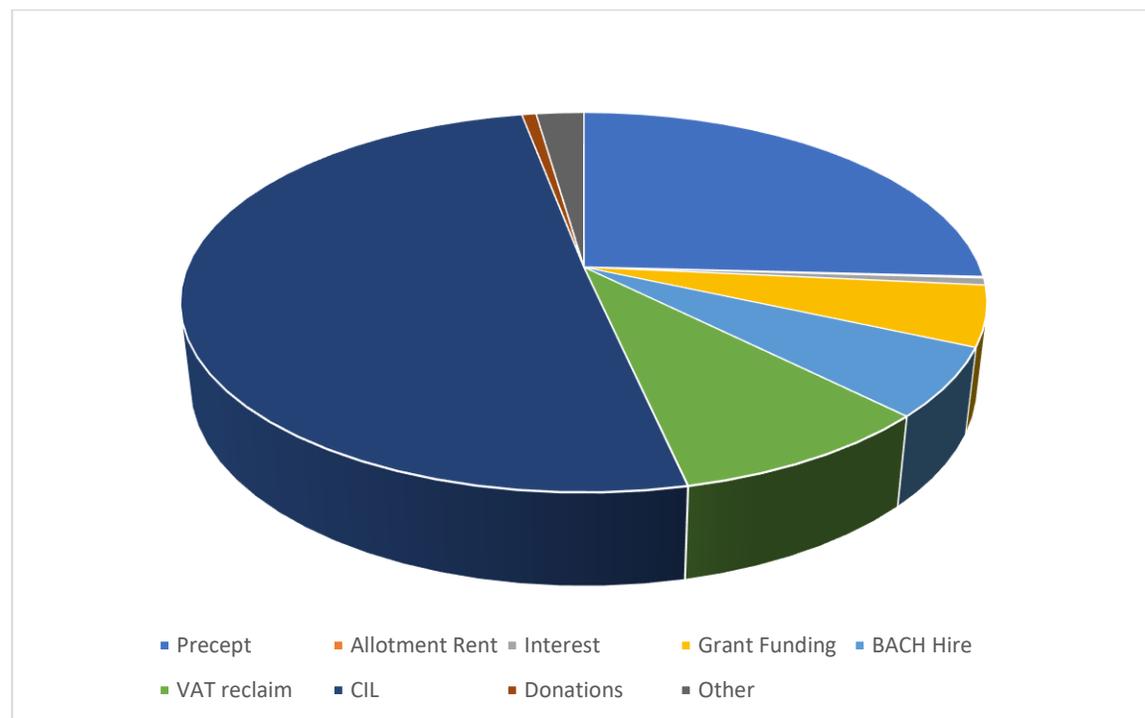
- Been an open, transparent and proactive Parish Council, taking new projects forward and sharing information on the WMPC website www.westmonkton.net , Monkton Matters website www.monktonmatters.co.uk and the WMPC Facebook Page www.facebook.com/westmonktonparishcouncil
- Continued to deliver the WMPC Vision and Objectives to focus WMPCs activities on important matters in our Parish.
- Taken an active role in the LGR discussion to form the Somerset Unitary Council.
- Jointly with Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, secured a lease for MCP.
- Used Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the delivery of parish priorities and objectives including:
 - Community Fridge
 - Purchase of a storage container to store items for community events.
 - New equipment for the Scout Group
 - Delivering the vision for MCP
 - Improvements at BACH including the Installation of a Hearing Loop and Air Conditioning.
 - Tree Planting
 - Provision of new, additional litter bins in the Parish.
 - Footpath restoration
 - Delivery of leaky dams at MCP.
- Applied for and secured grant funding to support our community work to deliver the Community Fridge, Platinum Jubilee Events, Warm Hubs and the Community Garden.

- Encouraged members of the community to give ideas of what WMPC should do and how money should be spent through regular posting on Monkton Matters, the Facebook Page and the Village News.
- Ensured value for money in respect of all of the Councils spend through obtaining quotes for all work.
- Publicised information about income and spend in a more understandable format (available below).

What income does WMPC receive and how money was spent in 2022/23?

The information from the financial spreadsheet for this year has been presented as a series of pie charts below. If you are interested in further details, please do not hesitate to contact clerk@westmonkton.net¹

Income:

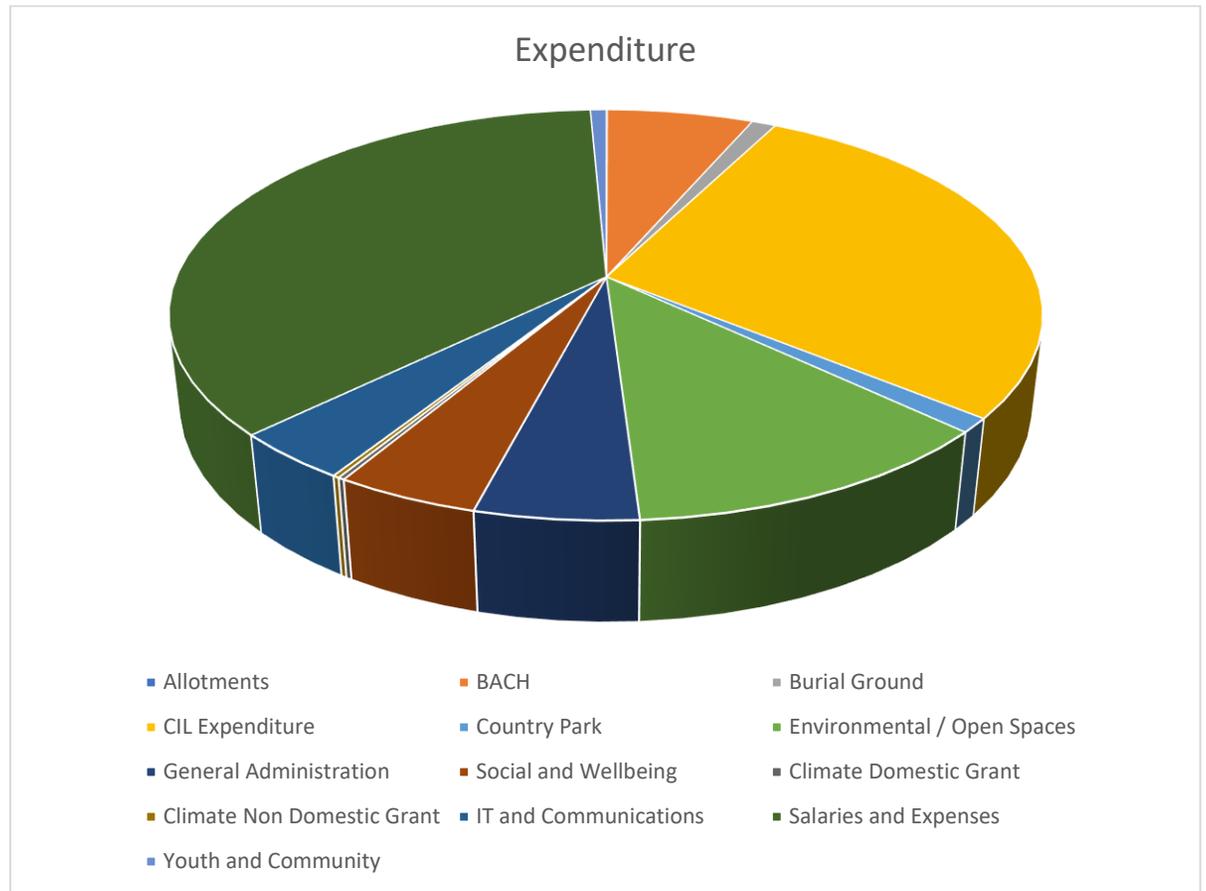


Type of income	Income received
Precept	£64517.00
Interest	£1503.90
Allotments	£300.00
Grant Funding	£12765.20
BACH Hire	£14629.13
VAT reclaimed	£22629.27
Donations	£1707.71
Community Infrastructure Levy	£126166.12
Other	£5701.75
Total income	£249920.10

¹ The information in the charts is based on the data available in February 2023.

Expenditure:

Type of Expenditure	Expenditure
Allotments	£53.17
Brittons Ash Community Hall	£11194.24
Burial Ground	£1840.00
CIL Expenditure	£49056.21
Country Park	£1937.54
Environmental / Open Spaces	£20787.76
General Administration	£8820.44
Social and Wellbeing Projects	£7788.02
Climate Domestic Grant	£350.00
Climate Non Domestic Grant	£350.00
IT and Communications	£6565.09
Salaries and Expenses	£63284.16
Youth and Community	£1227.47
Total Expenditure	£173254.10



If you have any comments to make on any of the pie charts presented above, please contact clerk@westmonkton.net

Cllr Stuart Haskins – Chairman’s Report

It doesn’t seem very long ago I was sat down writing the 2022 report and could not have ever imagined how the world could be changed by so many significant events that have affected us all in so many ways. You will see below that your individual Councillors and Clerks have all reported on the numerous events and activities they have been involved with but please forgive me if in my report I also comment on some of these same issues.

2022 will go down as a year of many changes and challenges for us all, of that I am sure. I feel it would be remiss of me to not firstly comment on the loss of Queen Elizabeth II. Whilst it may not have been a surprise to many, it still came as a shock the Nation and the World especially after it was only in June when we all came to gathered to celebrate Platinum Jubilee of Her Royal Highness.

Closer to home the Parish Council (PC) saw our long-standing Clerk Mrs Patricia Cavill (Tricia) finally hang up her Parish Council high viz jacket to take a very well earned retirement. On behalf of all the Councillors, Clerks and myself I would once again like to thank Tricia for almost 18 years of devoted service to our Parish Community. Tricia’s departure has seen Amy Shepherd take over many of Tricia’s responsibilities and Kate Welsh increasing her hours and role as Assistant Clerk Community. Both bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their roles and our community. Alongside our Clerks, Bethan Turner is also a vital member of the team providing back up for our many community schemes and functions such as the seed and plant swaps, toy swaps, planting competitions and the Parish Council Facebook page.

As I’m sure you know by now, the past year has seen the election of our new unitary “Somerset Council” Councillors and the setting up of a shadow council for the transition period until April this year when the Unitary Authority goes fully live. In connection with this and the establishment of a Taunton Town Council (TTC), an attempt was made to include our Parish into the new TTC. However, armed and supported by your response to our survey earlier in the year, the PC successfully fought off the attempt and in recent weeks it has been announced that our Parish will be in the Hestercombe Local Community Network (LCN) with North Petherton, Creech St Michael and a number of other neighbouring Parishes who all share common interests. These LCN will each have at least one dedicated Somerset Councillor giving us a direct say on matters that involve and concern us.

The securing of a lease on the Country Park (CP) was of great relief to both West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Councils and now gives us confidence and a firm footing for the future of the Park and hopefully the further extension of the World War 1 Wood. Councillor Alan Hall has reported extensively of the progress achieved in the CP this year but I feel I need to add a word of thanks and appreciation to Alan for all his time and hard work this year. Working with his endless list of contacts and official bodies, plus an excellent team of volunteers organised by Joe Pearson, the Park continues to mature and develop into an asset and wildlife haven that will be there for generations to come. With the completion of the grant funded pond, planning is now in progress for stone walling at the rear of the pond and a small car park for the disabled visitors.

Working with our neighbouring PC Cheddon Fitzpaine, the CP became the centre point of our Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Funded by a Lottery Grant the manufacture of a beacon basket was commissioned from a local metal craftsman Mr Kevin Chedzoy. Foundations and the erection of the beacon was undertaken by a team of Councillors and a local farmer with his equipment on the highest point in the CP where it is now a permanent fixture for future occasions.

The lighting of the beacon on June 2nd was watched and supported by over 600 of our communities and was visible from many parts of Somerset. This was then followed on the Saturday by a Party in the Park where children played games and ate hotdogs and burgers whilst the parents had a drink and listened to the Military Wives choir sing. This was the first event of this nature to be organised by the PC’s in the CP and was a steep learning curve for those involved. I think it’s fair to say

many useful lessons were learnt for future events. A big thankyou goes to all the Volunteers that helped make these events a success both before and on the days.

On a not so happy note, the Forest School building unfortunately continues to be vandalised by mindless individuals and is once again now in need of further work and repairs.

As we all know, the War in Ukraine has affected our lives in ways unimagined at this time last year and has added to the cost-of-living crisis. Coincidentally it was around this time last year that the PC started to investigate the Community Fridge idea as part of our Climate Change Action Plan to reduce waste. As most people now know, food that is before its use before date and after best before dates or is surplus from local food outlets is offered to the fridge where anyone wanting it can collect is at no cost and thus reducing food waste and stopping food going to landfill. Taking up the challenge, our Assistant Clerk Community Kate Welsh investigated the idea and following a visit to Frome to see their Community Fridge put together a grant application to fund ours. Soon we had a shed, a fridge and heaps of good will and enthusiasm to not only erect the shed but more importantly, volunteers from the community to clean, re stock and generally help run the initiative. So, a huge thank you must go our Assistant Clerk Community Kate Welsh and all the Volunteers that helped get this project off the ground and who now keep it running so well.

Housing Development in our Parish has continued this year with the completion of Stage 2 of the Hartnells Farm development. Whilst this development is not yet complete, i.e. stage 3, the works this year in connection with the development have caused a significant disruption to our residents, particularly in Richards Crescent whilst sewer works were undertaken. Hopefully there will be no further works required when the 3rd and final stage is constructed at some point in the future. A major issue for the community last year was the continued closure of the Creech Castle Junction for improvements. This finally came to an end in September but unfortunately we have not seen the decrease in traffic levels through Monkton Heathfield that we had hoped for. PC discussions with SCC Highways are ongoing about future options to reduce through traffic on the former A3259 but I can confirm that the 7.5 tonne weight restriction and the 20mph speed restriction are being made permanent from the spring of this year. The PC purchased our own SID (Speed Indication Device) which is has been deployed around our Parish at sites agreed with SCC Highways. This device is giving us real data about traffic flows and speeds which we hope will be of use in the future.

Activities at Britton Ash Community Hall (BACH) have continued with ever increasing support and participation from the community. Seed and plant swaps, stay and play group, community café, Warm Hub are just a few of the many things regularly taking place. Councillor Paul Ellison with Kate, our Assistant Clerk Community continue to develop ideas that are really making positive steps towards building a single community that benefits from interaction and inclusivity.

Facilities at the BACH have been further developed and improved this year with the installation of air conditioning in the Activity Hall and a hearing loop to the Committee room. These are unique selling points and make the facility the first choice for many groups arranging meetings and activities. In addition to this a storage container has been bought and positioned in the car park thus releasing valuable storage space inside the building.

Outside, the BACH Councillor Paul Ellison has made great progress with the Community Garden Project. Whilst not a big garden at present, it is proving to be worthwhile and enjoyable to those participating and we are hopeful that this coming year will see further expansion of this project as the PC continues its search for land for Allotments.

As I have already said the PC is committed to developing the community and bringing people together. Working with the Tacchi Morris Centre Quiz Nights and Music night have been arranged and been very well supported and give us confidence that other functions will be supported.

Having declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in December 2019, the PC continues to look for ways and opportunities to improve the environment and our community against the effects of global warming. To reduce rainwater run-off speed

from the lower Quantock Hills and working with SCC, the Local Lead Flood Authority and FWAG, a series of leaky dams have been installed on Allens Brook and during a recent heavy rainfall period proved to be very successful in slowing the flow to parts of our Parish that are vulnerable to flooding i.e. Bathpool area. Planting of trees continues to be high on our list of actions. Over the past year the PC has planted over 200 trees plus the cherry trees in our Platinum Walk avenue. Keeping them alive last year was quite a challenge with the very dry period we had but working with volunteers it looks as if our efforts to keep the new trees alive was successful. Thank you to all those who helped in the weekly watering party. The updated Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was adopted following the referendum. The updated plan will continue to be important for all future building developments in our Parish and looking ahead to this year it's clear it will once again be a busy one for your Councillors. Our ongoing engagement with the Developers of MH2, the Planning Authority and Creech St Michel PC amongst others will we hope, contribute to flagship "Garden Town" development. Plans are already being drawn up for the Coronation celebrations in the CP and we hope to see you all there for a really fun day. Other projects which are in the planning stage are a community transport scheme and an emergency contingency plan. Working with the EA we also hope to have our own permanent water pump installed at Bathpool on the Old River Tone. Finally I would like to give a big vote of thanks to one and all of the Councillors Clerks and Volunteers give up their time and who turn up when the call goes out. Without this support it would not be possible to deliver all the initiatives, projects and functions in our Parish that go to make it such a busy community.

Cllr Alan Hall – Vice Chairman

My remit has been to progress the completion of the CP and bring the Sports amenity to fruition.

Another year passes relative to the CP with the aim of opening the park by June this year. We now have the lease in place, giving us the opportunity now to proceed with bringing the park into a charity status. The weather has not been kind to us this year with first a heatwave and then consistent rain. However, the pond area is now near completion which will allow aquatic life to establish itself. Over the next few months, we aim to establish a dry-stone wall area to the north of the pond with landscape behind. Bench seating has been established around the dedication area, which we hope you will enjoy. The aim is to develop family events in the summer plans for which are underway to bring the community together such as we did during the late Queens jubilee celebrations.

We have established four leaky dams now on the Allens brook stream, adjacent to the CP, which slow the water by 10% thus reducing the flow towards Bathpool. Other systems are being considered to reduce and control the potential flooding to a greater extent further onto the Quantocks hills area to reduce the flow at source, which will have a far greater effect.

The design for the new sports pitches has been established, which are to be situated alongside the Eastern relief road, opposite the end of Hardys road. What has been included is a full-size rugby pitch to accommodate junior squads from Taunton Rugby club and expand the potential for junior rugby and ladies rugby. A cricket pitch to also expand the facilities for West Monkton Cricket club for second team, junior and ladies cricket. A BMX track to let the youngster of the Parish release their energy in a sport, which I hope will be a club. to give a sense of belonging channelled into a positive direction.

Looking into the feasibility of a sports hall alongside to enable other indoor sports activities which will enable the PC to achieve a 5 sport situation to enable Sports England match funding.

None of the above would have been achievable without working as a strong team of councillors and volunteers for which I thank them all.

Cllr Barry GageFootpaths

The project to replace styles with metal gates on public rights of way is now complete, a small number of styles remain where permission was withheld.

A special thanks to our footpath warden Martin Ellis and the other volunteers who help keep the paths free of brambles and undergrowth. Please help these volunteers by taking a pair of secateurs with you on your local walks.

Britons Ash Community Hall

It was our intention to erect a permanent building adjacent to the BACH to store equipment for our regular users and provide much needed storage space for the PC. The building would have been placed on school land and needed permission from the diocese. Unfortunately this permission was not given so it was decided to invest in a shipping container and place it in the BACH car park on parish land.

The container has been fully insulated to prevent condensation and had shelves erected both sides of the central corridor. This should meet our storage needs for the foreseeable future.

This year has also seen the addition of a hearing loop provided to the committee room. This means we now have hearing loops and air conditioning in both of our activity and committee rooms.

I have also been involved with other projects during the year namely:

Watering the newly planted trees in Platinum Walk and the replacement trees on the new development.

Erecting the shed for the community fridge and overseeing the electrical supply.

Collecting and installing the Christmas tree at the BACH.

Cutting the grass in the CP during the summer months and planting new trees during this winter.

Cllr Hazel Ellis

I first came to live the Parish in 1964 and have lived here, on and off, since then. I was first elected as Parish Councillor in 1989. I have served continuously as such, until the present date, and as you can imagine, I have witnessed a great many changes in that time, mostly for the good, but not all.

I run the local Rainbow Guide Unit, which although based in Ruishton, also covers West Monkton, Monkton Heathfield, Crech St Michael and the surrounding areas. I am urgently seeking an assistant to help me with this and if you would like to volunteer your help it would be gratefully appreciated by myself and the girls.

I am on the BACH Committee.

I am the Council's representative for the Spital Trust Almshouses. These are occupied by four older ladies who have a connection within the Parish.

Cllr Mark Besley

Despite the black on yellow warning signs, 30 mph speed limit and 7.5 ton weight restriction traffic is still too heavy along Monkton Heathfield Road as drivers avoid using the Western Relief Road. Through dialogue with the PC the weight restriction and speed limit will become permanent on this road making enforcement easier. There are still minor traffic calming measures that Persimmon are required to install on Monkton Heathfield Road which may deter motorists using this route. An improved pedestrian crossing is required at the bottom of Yallands Hill and the PC is trying to work with the developers and SCC Highways

to make this happen. SCC Highways have carried out comprehensive traffic monitoring in the parish which will be useful when analysing the effect of any larger traffic management intervention. Concern remains regarding the installation of a bus gate on Monkton Heathfield Road. The PC are working closely with SCC Highways department to try to develop a solution that will greatly reduce traffic going through the village but also allow access for residents and businesses. The PC have worked with a transport consultant to help us in this regard. SCC are looking into the specific legal requirement for a bus gate, a possible location for it and the effect it will have on traffic flows.

Outlying plans for the Monkton Heathfield Phase Two development have been shared with the PC however highways details are lacking. It is hoped that 'spine' road through the development won't become a rat run, that adequate car parking will be provided so cars don't need to park on pavements and that the district centre will be a tranquil area not next to a busy road. It is also hoped that an effective bus option be established from the onset and that the road from the Cricket Club roundabout to the Langaller roundabout will remain (albeit traffic calmed). School road has finally been resurfaced however gullies and potholes around the parish need attention. The PC have regular and constructive dialogue with SCC highways dept, if you have concerns about highways issues in the community please get in touch with the PC, any issues can be raised by members of the public at our twice monthly meetings.

Cllr Geoff Hope

As Covid restrictions eased in 2022 and life returned to a degree of normality the PC was once again allowed to meet together in the BACH to continue our work for the community in West Monkton, Bathpool, Monkton Heathfield and outlying villages and hamlets.

Providing Public Open Spaces, Children's Play Areas and Recreational Areas in new developments is essential for the well-being of residents. This has been recognised and included in UK planning laws that have been introduced in recent years. No longer can developers just build houses without green areas and facilities for the enjoyment and mental well-being of people of all ages who live there.

This was particularly important for the residents of the Monkton Heathfield 1 (MH1) development as there was a significant challenge concerning the huge numbers of trees provided by the developers that were once again dying due to the inappropriate timing of planting and lack of maintenance watering in the initial couple of years until the roots established themselves.

Following discussions with Persimmon/Redrow, the PC agreed to undertake the planting, and take responsibility for subsequent maintenance of replacement trees if the necessary funding was provided to the Parish Council. This was agreed and we began a programme of planting new trees within the spring planting season, employing a local professional arborist to do the work. I am pleased to report that almost all these new trees have successfully taken, aided by the hard work of Councillors and some volunteer residents who watered the trees regularly during the very warm period in late autumn. We also planted a great many flowering cherry trees along both sides of the path running parallel to Dyers Brook, and we look forward to seeing these blossom in 2023, commemorating the jubilee of Queen Elizabeth and remembering her passing in September.

However, this is not the end of the work replacing trees. Residents will have noticed that certain trees remain in a desiccated state, and these will be replaced during February, well before the end of the planting season in March. These will include many fruit trees, noticeably in the area of the Glebelands attenuation basin. Once again we urge residents to 'adopt-a-tree' near them and give them some water during the initial months of establishment this year.

Work is also on-going to adopt the Public Open Spaces on MH1, and once under our sphere of responsibility we will engage with the local community to allow residents to have a greater involvement determining how these areas are managed and utilised for the benefit of whole Parish.

Public Open Spaces and Children's Play areas in other recent developments within the Parish are being maintained by Management Companies or Somerset West & Taunton Council, and we await the implementation of the Somerset Council Unitary Authority to determine how this may be handled in future.

I also continue with my responsibility as a member of the BACH Committee, and look forward to working with my fellow Councillors and local resident volunteers to make this a valued facility for all those who live in West Monkton Parish and beyond to use and enjoy as we build the spirit of 'community' within the local area.

Cllr Paul Elliston

If you have a good enough memory to be able to recall last year's annual report, you'll remember talk of a community survey aiming to reach every household in the parish as a first step towards building a stronger sense of community. The plan was to help identify the strengths we have between us as local residents and to bring people with complementary skills and similar interests together. Whilst the approach is sound and has been successfully used elsewhere to kick-start community building, we found that response rates to the survey were so low in our pilot area that it was not worth rolling this out across the parish.

Instead, we have had to rely on the tried and tested approach of running community events (such as the Queen's Jubilee and Quiz Nights at the Tacchi Morris), organising regular groups for local residents (such as a weekly Community Café and the twice-weekly Stay and Play group) and creating volunteering opportunities whilst also meeting a community need (such as with the Community Fridge and monthly Litter Picking). I'll leave Kate, Assistant Clerk Community, to share more on these in her report, but let me share a bit more about one project with which I have been particularly involved.

As I write, the Community Garden is a collection of five small, raised beds outside the BACH. Sometimes working with the Primary School, where children have been involved in germinating and caring for seedlings, it has been tended by a group of volunteers from across the parish since it was set up at the end of August. As well as being another example of an activity that brings people together, it exists to provide local residents with fresh, seasonal produce, through the Community Fridge. As it was only set up at the end of August, it hasn't had much time to grow and make significant contributions, but has nevertheless produced the equivalent of around thirty bags of supermarket salad as well as some sprouting broccoli, chard and winter radish. Excitingly, thanks to a generous grant from a local company, we are now in a position to dramatically expand the growing area, deepen the partnership with the school and grow more healthy food for us all to enjoy. Expansion means more work to do, so if you fancy joining in and lending a hand, please let me know – greenfingers not required!

On the transport front, a good number of you contributed feedback to the government's Bus Back Better consultation. Unfortunately, the amount of funding released for this scheme was less than originally proposed and Somerset's share was not high. As a consequence, we're not going to be seeing the wholesale improvements to the bus service that many were calling for, but at least a £1 flat fare for a single ticket is now available within the greater Taunton area rising to £2 for journeys beyond. To complement the bus service, as a PC, we have continued to investigate the idea of a Community Transport scheme and hope to have more news on that soon.

As ever, if you have any ideas for improving our community, I'd love to hear from you. (paulelliston@westmonkton.net)

Cllr Ray Tully

Safe Route to School:

With the A38 Bridgwater Road opened at the Toneway, this has proved to be very safe for children going to school at Heathfield Community School. The traffic light system is one of the best I've seen in a long time. Youngsters tend to stay on the Aldi side of the road until they get to Acacia Gardens. Unfortunately we still have three points of concern for children going to school. The first is continuing flooding due to gullies not being cleared in Dyers Lane. The youngsters don't cross at

Swingbridge but stay on the main road which is not the safe route for school. The second is there are no bars from the exit from the CP on the A3259, the youngsters tend to be riding their bikes in the Park but this exit has a slope and if they don't stop they will end up in the road. Thirdly is concerning West Monkton Primary School. I've been monitoring the number of cars that no longer use the western relief road but go down Bridgwater Road to Roy's Place but then cut back onto the western relief road. We are all aware that cars and small children do not mix and I fear it will only be a matter of time before there is an accident.

West Monkton Village Hall:

It's been a mixed year for the Village Hall, as the Council representative and a trustee at West Monkton village hall I'm pleased to say that after Covid the Hall is gaining back some of its bookings. Unfortunately our Chair Mrs Joyce Kyte has retired to be closer to her family in Worcestershire. She will be sorely missed for the good work she did over a few decades. I'm proud to say I was excited to be elected as the new Chairperson. I am aware that Joyce will be a hard act to follow, but I intend to do the best I can. If you need any information about the hall please don't hesitate to ring or e-mail me on Telephone 01823 252368 E-mail raybathpool@gmail.com

Cllr Norman Cavill

This year I have been involved in major Council boundary reorganisation.

The Community Governance Review has created a Taunton Council, which has taken over some adjoining areas and parishes. Our Parish boundary has been moved to the railway line, so Hankridge is now part of Taunton. It is planned that with the establishment of a Unitary Authority, that the Parish Council will have more devolved responsibility.

To assist this, LCNs have been set up, ours is called 'Hestercombe LCN'. This LCN comprises West Monkton, Broomfield, Cheddon, Creech St Michael, Kingston and North Petherton Councils. These councils share many common objectives and the LCN will assist and enable future work. Throughout all this change we have retained our independence and will continue to work for the betterment of our Parish.

Clerk's Reports:

Amy Shepherd – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

The overall role of the Clerk is to ensure the smooth and lawful running of the Council and to advise Councillors accordingly. The Councillors' Code of Conduct, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders are revised, reissued and adopted every year. The Register of Councillors' Disclosable Interests is filed and maintained at SWT Council. Councillors can apply for a 'Dispensation' if Disclosable Interest would otherwise prevent them from speaking or voting.

Parish Council Meetings

PC meetings take place in the BACH twice a month on the second Tuesday and fourth Tuesday of every month at 7.00pm. Members of the public are invited to attend the meetings and speak in Public Question Time. All agendas and minutes from PC meetings are available on the PC website (www.westmonkton.net).

Parish Council Websites

In addition to the PC website and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/westmonktonparishcouncil), WMPC have a community website (www.monktonmatters.co.uk). Monkton Matters is an online space giving news, information and details of events in the Parish of West Monkton (incorporating Monkton Heathfield, West Monkton and Bathpool). Monkton Matters is for the community and its contents is developed and posted by the community. All local residents are encouraged

to contribute relevant articles or submit details of local events. The website is as good as we make it and the vision for the site is that it is a one-stop shop; the go-to place for all community matters.

Various local institutions, from schools to the police, from churches to the council, are represented on the site, posting updates. It is possible to find local businesses and services as well as hear about community groups, clubs and sports teams running in the local area. It has helpful information to aid exploration of the parish and its history as well and plenty more besides. If you would like to submit an article or an event for inclusion on the website, please visit the website and complete the form. Alongside news and events, businesses that are based or operate in the Parish can also add their details to the directory. If you would like to add your business details, please visit the website and complete the form. If you have any queries or would prefer to submit items for inclusion on the website via email please contact editor@monktonmatters.co.uk.

Neighbourhood Planning

After several years of work, ably led by the NP Steering Group Chair Mr K Tutill, the revised NP was made in September 2022 following a referendum. The revised NP reflects numerous changes in national and local legislation and policies. The revised NP is also very focussed on the environment of the two Parishes and the revisions, plus two additional policies, reflect changes in the importance being placed on environmental issues.

Planning

Planning is included on the agenda of both PC meetings each month. Members of the public are welcome to attend and speak. Between 1st April 2022 and 28th February 2023 over 53 planning applications have been considered by the PC and comments submitted to SWT (the Local Planning Authority). The submitted comments can viewed on SWT under the application registration number. Most applications are accompanied by reports on various elements of the development ranging from Sustainable Urban Drainage to Ecology to Travel Plans. The reports are posted on SWT website. Prior to planning meetings, the reports are read, notes prepared for councillor discussions, and a check made for conformity with NP policies.

Maidenbrook Country Park

The Parish Council remains committed, with CFPC, to the CP and a lease of the land has been secured from SWT. Work to the Forest School and Wildlife Pond have been completed during the year. Benches have been installed and further trees planted throughout the year too.

Climate initiative

The PC has developed a timetable for Climate Initiatives, working in conjunction with 'Businessallaboutyou'. Several successful events and articles have been tabled via social media, tying together the various environmental initiatives available in the Parish.

There have been seed swaps, toy swaps, clothes collections, farm walks, free hi-viz vests for schoolchildren and bike marking to encourage walking and cycling; sunflower growing to encourage pollinators; litter picking and much more.

Trees have been obtained from various sources and planted in the Parish. It is hoped more will follow.

Grants have been provided to individuals and organisations to assist with retrofitting buildings with extra insulation. Other grants have helped promote outdoor activities and exercise for health and well-being.

If you have ideas to help the Parish Climate Initiative, please get in touch!

Brittons Ash Community Hall (BACH)

The BACH is a purpose-built community facility that with the support of Cllr Barry Gage I oversee the running of. A Committee made up of Councillors and volunteers including Gordon and Maggie Little and Tricia Cavill also provide invaluable support with running the BACH, particularly from Maggie with Gordon's support managing the bookings and diary for the BACH. The BACH is now being used at pre-Covid levels and is available for use by individuals and groups for regular weekly bookings, group meetings, activities, and private functions. The BACH has a number of exercise classes, an art group, mums and baby groups and many more. Take a look at the online calendar available here <https://westmonkton.net/brittons-ash-community-hall-bach> or at the Welcome Screen to see what activities are taking place.

If you would like further information about booking the BACH, please contact the Bookings Officer, Maggie (bachbookings@westmonkton.net)

Allotments

The Spital Allotments continue to be managed by the PC. The allotments are popular and in full use, however, the PC holds a waiting list so if you are interested in having an allotment, please get in touch and your details will be added.

In addition to the on-going management of the PC assets and servicing the meetings of the PC, there have also been a number of projects that have started or continued during 2022/23 that I have supported. These include:

1. Secured a joint lease (with Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council) in respect of the CP.
2. MH1 Public Open Spaces – negotiations have continued throughout the year with the developers about the completion and handover of the Public Open Spaces in MH1 to the PC to manage following their completion.
3. Deployment of the PC SID at locations across the Parish. The data that is collected is shared with the Police to inform their enforcement schedule.
4. Planting 30 trees in MH1 as part of the SWT Free Trees Initiative.
5. Actively engaged with Planning Officers and Developers regarding the MH2 planning application.
6. Continued in our negotiation with representatives of Persimmon Homes and SWT about the delivery of the MH1 Sports Pitches.
7. Read and developed responses to local and national consultations about matters that affect our Parish.
8. Reviewed and noted the conditions of Planning Permissions and Section 106 agreements to ensure the obligations are delivered.

If you would like any further information about any of these projects or have any ideas of other projects that the PC could support, please get in touch – clerk@westmonkton.net.

WMPC Finances

The WMPC Financial Regulations govern the way WMPC finances are run.

Daily, weekly and monthly accounting tasks are carried out by the Responsible Financial Officer. The tasks include paying for goods and services, maintaining the payroll, pensions and HMRC, obtaining quotes, monitoring the budget, ensuring that adequate insurance is in place for the Council, its employees, and its assets, keeping Councillors and Clerks up to date with latest ideas and legislation by ensuring regular training is available, ensuring that WMPCs communications and IT are up to date and operating efficiently, asset management and risk assessment.

When commissioning work, WMPC obtains a number of quotes, to ensure best value, and interest from local suppliers is viewed favourably.

Every month a financial spread sheet is issued which demonstrates receipts and payments, conformity with budget line by line, and a bank reconciliation. The Council is not VAT registered and VAT is reclaimed quarterly.

Audit Working Party

Once a quarter the Audit Working Party (AWP) meets to review the PCs finances as part of the risk management procedures in place. At these meetings a more detailed bank reconciliation is scrutinised, the quarterly VAT reclaim is reported, the Financial Regulations are kept under review, and other matters needing attention are considered.

The AWP remains vigilant on the level of exposure of the bank balances and investments. The AWP considers grant applications received in two windows, 1 April to 15 May, and 1 September to 15 October. Further information on the Grants Policy can be found on the website www.westmonkton.net.

Recommendations from the AWP are made to main Council.

The Budget and Precept

The budget and precept are set in November for the year ahead. The main source of income for the Parish is the precept which is based on the budget.

In November 2022, a review of last year's budget and the year to date was undertaken; and the services that were likely to be devolved under the move to a Unitary Authority were taken into account.

CIL is an additional source of income, received from developments in the area, which is a Levy paid to the Local Planning Authority (SWT), of which the Parish Council receives 25% because it has a NP. The proportion would only be 15% without a NP. The CIL funds must be spent within 5 years or handed back.

The budget reflects the needs and aspirations of the growing community in our Parish and the PCs desire to maintain all the Parish as a safe and pleasant place to live and work.

An outline budget for the next three years is included in the budget preparation to ensure a degree of future proofing is built in.

The precept for 2023/2024 has increased quite significantly, with more community work and devolved services likely under Unitary, the increase in precept was necessary this year and follows many years of no or minimal increases.

The Internal and External Audits of the PC documents were completed successfully for the year 2021- 2022. Recommendations from the Internal Auditor have been incorporated into the regular financial procedures of the Parish.

The Internal Auditor has been appointed for the year ending 2023, and work on the year end accounts will begin soon.

The report on the External Audit, which is conducted by the Audit Commission, can be inspected by members of the public by appointment, please look out for the notice on the website in July.

Kate Welsh – Assistant Clerk (Community)

I joined the PC in October 2021, since then I have been involved in managing a number of projects in West Monkton Parish and employed a fair number of amazing volunteers. My role is to support the clerk with the community element of the PC and this year my role has been evolving and I am thoroughly enjoying the new people I have met.

Firstly, were the events for the Late Queen's Platinum Jubilee which was very well attended, it was lovely to see so many people come together for the Beacon Lighting and the Party in the Park. Having received a fair amount of feedback via Survey Monkey we have been able to plan forward for this year, taking into consideration your views and ideas.

We have been running some community Events at the Tacchi Morris Arts Centre, the pub quizzes have been especially popular and we have had a full set of teams on each evening and have more planned throughout the year. The amazing 'A Minor Crisis', a local band played for us at Christmas and this was well attended and a great evening was had by all. We hope they are able to play for a larger crowd at the CP in the summer...

This spring and summer we have a number of community events lined up at the CP, firstly an Easter Egg Hunt on the 8th of April, which was something suggested from event feedback. We have consulted with the children at West Monkton Primary School in their School Council meetings and they have made some suggestions for our Easter Egg Hunt and who better to hear from than the children themselves. I am looking forward to hearing their ideas for more of our community events in the coming months. We are also making plans for the King's Coronation and awaiting news from the National Lottery about funding, but we are hoping for this to be a vibrant and busy event with plenty of fun and entertainment for all. King Charles is keen to make his own mark at the Coronation and is keen to celebrate diversity so we will look to focus plans around this. Finally due to the number of requests from the community, we will be running a 'Dog Show' on the 18th of June 2023 and St Giles Animal Rescue will be running this with us. We are keen to invite business and artists to have stalls so if you are interested in having a stall at either or both events, please let us know.

We continue to have a number of volunteer litter pickers who go about quietly across the parish collecting litter as and when needed and we appreciate all that they do. If anyone else is interested in this, then please get in touch as we have litter picking equipment available for our volunteers. We also have a companion volunteer who has become a friend to many in the community, supporting those who are isolating, taking them to hospital appointments or picking up a bit of shopping. These volunteers quietly support the community, and I am aware that they have got a lot out of volunteering in this way and that is what it is all about.

One of the most inspiring and exciting projects last year was 'Our Community Fridge – Monkton Heathfield', supported by the local Coops and some other smaller outlets in the parish and beyond. This project has been about reducing food waste whilst supporting the community and it has been an incredible success. We have saved more than 5 tonnes of waste going to landfill! The volunteers at the fridge are the ones to thank for this as they do all the hard work, daily collections, daily cleaning, opening and closing each day, book organising and tidying. I am sure many in the community would like to also thank them for helping provide this asset to the community. We currently have about 20 volunteers involved in the project who work together so well to make it run so smoothly.

The Community Café has continued to run each Wednesday, and this has given us chance to talk to the public about the needs of the community. This is how the Stay and Play Group idea formed, parents and grandparents needing a place to meet and support each other and for the little ones to start those early interactions. This has been really well attended and we are now running 2 groups, one on a Wednesday at 12.30pm until 2pm and the other on a Thursday from 10.30am until 12 noon. We have more than 80 families who have signed up to the groups and it has been a real treat to meet families and little ones over the last few months.

Plans for the following year are to develop community events, possibly launch a community transport scheme whilst continuing to juggle existing projects. Over the next year if anyone wants to get involved in supporting the community through volunteering or have an idea for a great event or project then please get in touch or come and meet me at the Community Café on a Wednesday afternoon between 2-4pm.

The reports from Councillors are presented in accordance with the CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY 2011, the guiding principles of which are that publicity by local authorities should: be lawful, be cost effective, be objective, be even-handed, be appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity, and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

Meeting Schedule 2023

Meetings are held either via Zoom or in the Committee Room, BACH commencing at 7.00pm.

All PC meetings are open to the public and there is usually a Public Question Time (at around 7.10pm) where the formal meeting is suspended whilst questions and comments are welcomed from anyone living in the parish. To avoid disappointment, please note that this is not a discussion forum. .

January 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
3	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
4	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
5	29	30	31				

February 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
5				1	2	3	4
6	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
7	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9	26	27	28				

March 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
9				1	2	3	4
10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
12	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
13	26	27	28	29	30	31	

April 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
13							1
14	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
17	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
18	30						

Key:

	Parish Council Meeting – Business focused
	Parish Council Meeting – Project / Community focused
	Annual Parish Meeting
	Bank Holidays

May 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
18		1	2	3	4	5	6
19	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
20	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
22	28	29	30	31			

June 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
22				1	2	3	
23	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
24	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
26	25	26	27	28	29	30	

July 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26							1
27	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
29	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
30	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
31	30	31					

August 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31			1	2	3	4	5
32	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
33	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
34	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
35	27	28	29	30	31		

September 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
35						1	2
36	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
37	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
38	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
39	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
40	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
42	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
43	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
44	29	30	31				

November 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
44				1	2	3	4
45	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
46	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
47	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
48	26	27	28	29	30		

December 2023							
W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
48						1	2
49	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
50	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
51	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
52	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	31						