

BINEGAR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting with Parishioners held on 11 May 2015 in the Memorial Hall

Present: Jon Abbott, Philip Blatchford, Richard Higgins (Chair), Cath Law, Phil Roberts, John Scadding and David Stone.

In attendance: Diane Abbott (Clerk) and fifteen parishioners.

1.	Introduction The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming parishioners to the Annual Parish Meeting.	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting The meeting noted the Minutes of the 13 May 2014.	
3.	Annual Report of the Chair The meeting received a report from the Chair highlighting the year of 2014 to 2015. For Councillors, the major event of the year was appointing Diane Abbott. Diane quickly took up the reins of Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and we now benefit from her hard work, organisation and enthusiasm. Perhaps the most visible event was felling the cypress trees in the cemetery. When we asked parishioners, views were mixed. Most favoured felling and, given the age of the trees, this was what the Council decided. Since then, we have been asking how we can improve the cemetery. Ideas include a Lych gate, a seat to rest and trees to shelter the boundary. Not all was well in the cemetery this year. When the Council did its safety check and laid unstable headstones down on the ground, there were huge protests. We accepted that we had not followed best practice and apologised for distress caused. This next year, we shall review how we put our policy into practice. The churchyard of Holy Trinity Church, which celebrates its 950 th birthday this year, is also a Parish Council responsibility and we replaced the gate. The old gate had done sterling service for 60 years. <i>Binegar Playing Fields Group</i> , led by Philip Blatchford, runs the playground, which continues to be a popular attraction. What you may not know is what this involves. There has to be a weekly safety check, regular maintenance and replacement of old apparatus. Volunteers, including Councillors, do this. The <i>Group's</i> efforts raised £1,540 this year that it put towards a new seesaw and swings. Mendip District Council routinely asks parish councils about planning applications. There have been several controversial ones brought on by relaxed planning rules. Among these was one for a housing estate behind Flowerstone. The applicant withdrew this application in the face of opposition. Most parishioners were relieved. Developers, however, continue to challenge Mendip's planning rules and the parish council must do all it can to secure orderly development in Gurney Slade and Binegar.	

	<p>There has been a less happy outcome at Emborough Pond where the owner has wrecked the view, built fences and planted hedges to keep local people out. Mendip has allowed this to happen even though Emborough Pond is one of its protected <i>Special Landscape Features</i>. Mendip's enforcement has been weak. Sadly, that has just helped a free-for-all development culture to run riot.</p> <p>Kath Newman received the <i>Award for Services to the Community</i> from Somerset County's Chairman. Kath is an inspiration and has, for 40 years, worked tirelessly to make our villages better places in which to live. The Council salutes Kath.</p> <p>As part of its quest for better communication with parishioners, we have put up new notice boards and we keep a full record of all we do on our website at www.binegar-pc.org.uk. This included installing a bin for dog waste and training a number of local people in basic life support.</p> <p>Finally, three Councillors retired in the year: Jude Robbins, Roger Anderson and Gus Halfhide. They all volunteered and contributed to making a difference locally. On behalf of the Council, I thank them. In their place, Phil Roberts and Jon Abbott joined us. With other Councillors, they continue, after the election, to give freely of their time and energy to help our community.</p>	
4.	<p>Parishioners' questions Discussion followed on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planned pedestrian crossing on the A37 – the Chair gave an up-date from Somerset County Council. • Emborough Pond - in particular the unregistered footpath raised. Anne Caley agreed to look at forms for applying to have the footpath registered. • Clarke's Pool – the Chair advised Clarke's Pool was an agenda item for the following Council meeting. • Cemetery trees – Richard Priestley thanked the Council for the tree improvements in the cemetery. • The Batch – concerns were raised regarding the increased parking on the Batch. The Chair gave an overview on the current situation and stated the Council were currently powerless to act. 	
5.	<p>Date and time of next meeting It was agreed to hold the next Annual Meeting with Parishioners on 3 May 2016</p>	