**Minutes of Broadways Annual Parish Meeting held at**

**Broadway Village Hall at 7.30pm on 9th May 2023**

Present ; Councillor Gregory ( chairman) Councillors Champion, Frayne, Driskell, Preece, Clerk Fiona Mckenzie and 2 members of the public

1. The Parish Council Chairman welcomed those present
2. Apologies were received from Councillot Toms
3. The Minutes from 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman
4. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council - attached

5) There were no comments or questions on the Chairman’s report

6) Broadway Groups - The meeting was advised there will be a new Youth Club starting for secondary school age children soon to be held on Sunday evenings

7) there was no other Parish items

Meeting closed 7.45pm

Broadway Parish Council

Chairman’s report: 2022-23

I should start this report on the activities of the Parish Council since May 2021 by paying tribute to the work of councillors in pushing forward the Council’s work agenda. They contribute their time and experience voluntarily and I am grateful for the contributions they make. We have had one vacancy among the membership: the retirement on ill health grounds of the Vice Chairman, Richard Baker. The Council wrote to him to express its regret at his departure and to thank him for his work as a councillor over many years. Since then the Council heard with regret of his death. I should like us to stand for a brief silent tribute to Richard.

The Council is currently seeking his replacement by co-option and I am pleased that Cllr Champion has agreed to become Vice Chairman. The Council has been well supported again this year by our Clerk, Fiona Mckenzie. Our thanks are due, too, to Tom Dixon, the village Environmental Warden, who monitors and reports on our flora and fauna and tests the water in the Ding and Varden’s Pond.

The Council has considered a wide range of issues during the course of the year, though particular attention has focussed on 3.

The first is the redevelopment of the village playing field. This has required considerable work to plan the new play park, contract for the new equipment, raise the necessary funds and recruit volunteers to help with refurbishing the retained equipment. It is particularly pleasing that this has all been accomplished in time for the play park to reopen last Friday. I am particularly grateful for the help I have received from colleagues, especially Cllr Champion, and to the Horton and Broadway Eco Community Group for their work to enhance the play park’s appearance and environmental value, to Neroche Primary School for their advice and funding and to the volunteers and donors who have supported the Council’s efforts. This represents a major improvement in facilities for village children.

The second issue is the proposed dualling of the A358 by National Highways. The Council has continued its strategy of seeking changes to the proposed route to protect the village’s interests. It has done this by representing its views directly to National Highways, for instance by responding last year to the second consultation run by National Highways, and by participating actively in the work of the Community of Parishes, of which I am the Convenor. The Community of Parishes has developed into a respected and effective representative of parish council concerns and counter proposals. Credit for this goes in part to the work of Martin Hills, a resident of Broadway and a retired highways engineer. The Parish Council awaits the publication of the delayed draft Development Consent Order by National Highways which will trigger the commencement of the Public Enquiry in which the Community of Parishes and this Parish Council will be involved.

The third significant area of work for the Parish Council has been issues around the maintenance of the public open spaces at Standerwick Orchard, which are the property of the Parish Council. Over the last year the Parish Council has continued to fund the contracts

for the maintenance of these public spaces, including grass cutting and shrub and tree pruning, at a cost of almost £2,000, and has renewed fencing adjacent to Bullen Court. Last year the Council consulted all Standerwick Orchard residents on the future maintenance of the area around the attenuation pond bordering on Bullen Court. In the event, the Council concluded that the balance of opinion was for retaining the current arrangements for maintaining this area. However, it is also clear that there are various views among residents on what that maintenance should comprise. The Parish Council’s view is that while the area needs to be kept under control, and trees and shrubs occasionally pruned, it should largely be left to its own devices and that is what will be the policy going forward.

While the Parish Council is pleased with the arrangements for maintaining the Standerwick Orchard public open spaces, it has been concerned about the cost this incurs. The arrangement devised in 2008 by the then Parish Council was that these costs should be met from the income derived from the £55,000 given to it by Wimpey Ltd when it acquired the land. While that worked for a few years, it has not done so since at least 2016, with the result that the cost of Standerwick Orchard maintenance has fallen on the Council’s general budget and not funded by the Wimpey money. A proposal to use some of the Wimpey money to fund the redevelopment of the playing field was opposed by some Standerwick Orchard residents on the grounds that the money was restricted to maintaining the public open spaces. So the Council has resolved in future to use the Wimpey money only for that purpose, minus the amount which should have come out of it since 2016. It is investing £20,000 of the Wimpey money to generate income and is likely to invest most of the balance in the reserves later this year.

It has to be said, that the Parish Council regards this funding arrangement as unsatisfactory, since even with the increased return on investment to be realised currently, the amount of income will not cover the increasing maintenance costs. The result will be a gradual reduction in the Wimpey money and in the income derived from it. At some future date, therefore, the Wimpey money will be exhausted and the cost of maintaining the public open spaces will fall on the precept. It remains the Council’s view that it would be better to move to that arrangement now and so make the Wimpey money available to the village as a whole. However, it considers that without the agreement of Standerwick Orchard residents it cannot change to this more sensible arrangement.

Another issue dealt with by the Parish Council has been responding to 21 planning applications referred to it by South Somerset District Council. The Council objected to only 2. One was the reapplication for 26 houses on the Bell Field. The other was for an extension to a property in Standerwick Orchard which the Council considered significantly out of character with the property and with the style and appearance of the surrounding estate. SSDC nonetheless approved the application. It is noteworthy that the applications of most concern to the Council, notably the 26 houses proposed for the Bell Field, the 9 proposed on land adjacent to the Old Vicarage and the 6 on land adjacent to Orchard Court, are still being considered by SSDC. The Parish Council has objected to all 3, believing that constructing another 41 houses in addition to the 35 already consented for the Pound

provides no direct benefit to Broadway and is likely to have a damaging impact on village life.

During the year the Parish Council has reviewed the state of all its assets in the village and is drawing up an annual maintenance plan to ensure that they are kept in good order over the coming years. This has included renewing the defibrillator at Elm Close, funding for which falls on the Council, with the help of Church View Medical Centre. The Parish Council has also paid for 2 of the highway signposts in the village to be repaired and refurbished.

The Parish Council has also worked with local residents to bring pressure to bear on Wessex Water to deal with the increasing frequency of sewer overflows in Suggs Lane during heavy rain. This problem continues and will be the focus of further work by the Parish Council in the coming year. The Parish Council has also pressed Somerset County Council to resolve the flooding which occurs at the culvert over the Ding in Suggs Lane. Thanks to the efforts of Cllr Frayne and local residents, the County Council has started to develop a plan for dealing with the problem. The Parish Council will be monitoring this closely.

The Parish Council has continued to monitor the condition of the village’s footpaths, has arranged and paid for the Christmas lights and tree and has conducted all its business in accordance with its statutory duties and within its financial resources.

Finally, we have said goodbye to the County and District Councils and have now to establish a relationship with the new unitary authority. In that regard we look forward to working with our Somerset Council representative, Sue Osborne.

In summary, the Parish Council has much to be pleased about in its management of its resources and assets over the last year, particularly the real improvement in the state of the playing field. The year ahead should not be quite as busy as the last, but the A358 dualling will need input from the Parish Council and the implementation of the annual maintenance plan will require close attention. No doubt planning applications will keep us busy, too.