

**Minutes of the Yeovilton Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday April 12th 2022
at St. Bartholomew's Church, Yeovilton at 7.30pm.**

Present: Chairman, Mr. A. Hickman, Mr. P. Browncey, Mrs. R. S. Jones, Mr. R. Luck, Mr. M. Lewis, County Councillor, Mr. A. Capozzoli, District Councillor, Rev. B. Faulkner, Mr. R. Moffatt, Mrs. C. Hickman, Mrs. H. Crabb, Mr. S. Prendiville and Mr. P. Horsington, Clerk.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr. D. Board, Mr. B. Barlow, Mr. A. Elliott, Mr. C. Hull, District Councillor, Mr. P. Rowsell, District Councillor, Mr. R. Graydon, CRO, RNAS and PCSO Megan Day.

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on May 11th 2021 were signed as correct.

Chairman's & Councillors' reports

Mr. Hickman gave his report, which included the following -
The Covid 19 pandemic was still an influence during the year. The meeting in December had been cancelled at short notice by RNAS.

Mr. Hickman thanked Mr. Elliott in his absence, who had retired as Chairman in January, for all his contribution to the Council, since May 2021.

Planning is continuing to be a problem with lack of decisions being made by SSDC due to Phosphate issues on the Somerset levels. There is still one outstanding application in the Parish.

Mr. Hickman thanked the members, County Councillor, Mr. M. Lewis, and the three District Councillors, Mr. A. Capozzoli, Mr. C. Hull, and Mr. P. Rowsell. Thanks also to Mr. Graydon, CRO RNAS and the Clerk for their support.

Mr. Luck was thanked for all his work with hiring the VAS device from Ilchester Parish Council. This has confirmed that both in Podimore & Bridghampton a vast majority of drivers were travelling well over the 30 MPH limit. It was noted that these figures have been forwarded to the Police.

County & District Councillors' reports

Mr. M. Lewis, County Councillor thanked the Councillors for their support during the year & stated that there will be elections for the new Somerset Council on May 5th Mr. Lewis was thanked for all his support.

Mr. Capozzoli, District Councillor reported the principal issue was the impact of the Phosphate issues on planning decisions. Meetings of SSDC have now returned to the occasional in person rather than via Zoom. Mr. Capozzoli was thanked for his support during the year.

Church report.

Rev. B. Faulkner reported that the Annual Parochial meeting will be held in May at St. Peter's Podimore. Rev. Faulkner thanked the Councillors for their contribution to the Parish.

RNAS report.

Mr. Hickman read the RNAS report received from Mr. Graydon -

In this report I am covering points that I believe will be of interest to the Parish Council and any members of the public attending, including briefs on the programmes of our major operators. The latter I haven't included before, but I think it may be enlightening to have an insight into the extent of our support and influence worldwide.

Air Day

After a great deal of speculation over some months, we were able to announce officially on 17th March that there will be no Royal Navy International Air Day this summer. I would stress that this is not a cancellation as the event was never confirmed; and is due to commercial reasons. At this stage I am not able to offer any further news on future Air Days, but will keep you posted as and when I am able.

Low Flying

We have an enduring obligation to maintain the currency of our aircrew. Flying is a perishable skill which, if it were allowed to lapse through lack of training, would considerably reduce combat effectiveness. You will read in the CHF and WMF individual unit briefs below how crucial this is. Necessarily some of our flying will be at low level and at night. We recognise fully the impact that this can have on our neighbours and take steps to ensure that any intrusion is kept to a minimum. If any member of our local community has concerns, either generally or what they may judge to be a specific problem, these should be addressed either to the Ministry of Defence Low Flying Complaints Unit at RAF Wittering at SWK-lowflying@mod.gov.uk or to me at robert.graydon422@mod.gov.uk. For specific enquiries, dates and times are crucial. You have all chosen to live in communities that are very close to our busy operational airfield and we appreciate the support you give us.

Perimeter fence

After a long period of time when there were issues with the serviceability of fence, we have now replaced this with a robust fence of the 'frangible' variety. We know that our landowning neighbours have suffered considerable frustration with livestock easily being able to get through weaknesses in the old fence – we truly appreciated the forbearance of our friends while we obtained the necessary funding from the Ministry of Defence. The new fence is strong and secure and the frangibility allows the fence to collapse under both forward and upward pressure. In the event of an aircraft incident, this should assist the pilot to maintain control of the aircraft. Likewise, if the fence were hit by an escaped animal running at speed, any injury to the animal or damage to the fence should be minimised.

Publication of Flying Programmes

I continue to receive requests from members of the public to publish our flying programmes in advance. I accept this might be useful, however I can only reiterate that to advertise widely in advance would, in our view, lead to misunderstandings. There are a number of reasons why we need to adjust our flying patterns at very short notice: weather conditions, aircraft serviceability and unforeseen operational requirements being uppermost.

Flooding

The historical situation at Stockwith Cross and on towards Bridgehampton appears to have improved following works in that area. This year we have not had to assist with escorting locals across the airfield in the event of flooding in Yeovilton village. That option remains open, subject to the previously agreed timetable.

Commando Helicopter Force

1. The MK3 'green' Merlins have all been upgraded and have become the MK4 Commando Merlin, which is coloured grey. All the MK4s are with CHF and there will be the same number of Merlins as before.
2. CHF consists of two Merlin squadrons (845 NAS and 846 NAS), a Wildcat squadron (847 NAS), a Combat Services Support squadron (CSS) and the Commando Mobile Air Operations Team (Commando MAOT).
3. Due to the Merlin upgrading process over the past two years, coupled with overseas deployments, exercises and tasks, well over half the Merlin fleet were away at any one time and fewer could be seen flying in the skies over Somerset. CHF is now back to normal and full numbers of our Merlins are back to flying training. Subsequently, there will be more flying in our skies than for some time. Such day and night flying training is critical to keep CHF operational.
4. CHF has roles far and wide. Our helicopters regularly train with or deploy on the Royal Navy's two new aircraft carriers. 845 Naval Air Squadron was part of the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group's world tour in 2021 and all CHF squadrons have trained with HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. Our annual Arctic flying training and ground training continues to be undertaken 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle at the Royal Norwegian Airforce Base in Bardufoss, Norway. We are now in our 51st of providing this critical winter training in Norway to the UK's helicopter forces. At the same time in recent years CHF elements have participated in large NATO lead exercises in the far north. This year saw 30000 troops from NATO countries participating in

Exercise Cold Response. It saw CHF working closely with NATO partners, especially the US Marine Corps.

5. Another regular requirement is for the Force to provide helicopters to deploy to the Caribbean on board RN vessels for the duration of the hurricane season. These annual events can wreck incredible destruction and cause immeasurable hardship to the people of the Caribbean islands. Often it is only helicopters that can assist with disaster relief and deliver humanitarian aid.
6. Throughout 2022 CHF will continue to train across the UK as well as more locally and the Force remains on standby to deploy anywhere in the world at short notice to provide whatever helicopter support the UK Government tasks us with. We are proud to be based in Somerset, the historical home of the Fleet Air Arm, and the Force continues to build and maintain strong ties across the Somerset and neighbouring counties.

Wildcat Maritime Force

Four Wildcat Flights in support to Operation Fortis - Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment combining the capabilities of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in support of global operations. This deployment saw the largest number of personnel embarked in HMS Queen Elizabeth since she entered service and also the largest single deployment of F-35 fighter aircraft.

Fielding of Martlet missile system and successful test firings – now regularly flying with this from Yeovilton.

Support to operations to the Eastern Mediterranean and extensively in the Caribbean.

A permanent presence in the Gulf and frequent counter drug operations.

Personnel deployed as ambulance drivers in Wales in support of the COVID effort.

Support to COVID response in Yeovil Hospital and other hospitals in the Southwest.

Other emergent tasking dependent on world events.

Maintaining 24/365 Very High Readiness aircraft to deploy in support of Maritime Counter Terrorism and Fleet Ready Escort (a single warship maintained at high readiness for deployment at short notice anywhere in the World). Various national/international exercises including deploying to Norway for Exercise Cold Response.

Support to Ceremonial events, including the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Falklands 40.

As this is the last Annual Parish meeting of Yeovilton Parish, before Limington is added to form Yeovilton & District Parish Council from May 10th, Mr. Hickman, Chairman thanked all members past and present for their support over the years and closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

Signed:

Date: