

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8th June 2020

held remotely via Zoom.

Present – Graham Gleed (Chairman), Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair), Nick Sloan, Heather Venn, Ann Finn, Janice Pearce, David House, Peter House, John Hembrow, David Fothergill (County Councillor)

In Attendance – Kelly de Silva, Charlotte Sundquist (Footpath Officer)

20. Apologies for absence – Sue Buller (District Councillor)

Minutes of the previous meeting – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 11th May 2020 had one amendment; Min.9 GG recalls not SS – Line 5. They were agreed by all to be accurate; and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of interests and dispensations - None

Public question time – GG reports he has received 3 contributions from members of the public. Two queries were concerning the use of agricultural land at Matchams Farm, Curload. The members of the public had complained about campers and caravans staying on the farm and about motorbike noise which was described by one complainant as 'terribly intrusive'. It was agreed that HV will have an initial conversation with the owners to discuss overnight stays in the light of the current Covi-19 guidance and nuisance of motorbike noise.

A member of the public raised a question whether the PC should approve any planning applications that use fossil fuels for heating?

While the PC fully supports the move away from fossil fuels it is not possible to determine at the time of the application what source of energy will be used. It was felt that this is more a matter for building control when the relevant regulations are enacted.

21. Planning

No planning application decisions have been made since the previous meeting

36/20/0009 Wayside, Slough Lane, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a detached storage building

The following response was agreed by the PC;

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council approves of this addition to the site.”

22. Annual Governance and Accountability Return

Elizabeth Hembrow has recently completed the independent internal audit of the Parish Council financial records. All was deemed to be in good order and all internal control objectives had been adhered to.

22.1 All members of the PC agreed that the accounting statement in Section 2 of the AGAR as presented by the Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer were accurate for the 2019/20 financial year, and the signed by the Chairman.

22.2 All members of the PC agreed that the Annual Governance Statement in Section 1 of the AGAR - which requires the PC to ensure a sound system of internal control is in place for the preparation of the accounting statements - was adhered to and signed by the Chairman.

KdS to sign as Clerk/RFO and send the AGAR to the external auditors

KdS to confirm the dates of the period for the exercise of public rights and send to NS for publication on the website by 1st July 2020.

23. Covid 19

GG highlights concerning press coverage which suggests that there has been a distinct upturn in the R rate in the South West.

DF reports that Somerset infection rates are still relatively low in comparison with the rest of the UK, with 170 deaths, all of which are a tragedy.

At Yeovil Hospital the number of C19 admissions is low however Musgrove Park is higher.

DF continues that overall the virus is under control with school years Reception, 1 and 6 returning to school this week, and years 10 and 12 returning next week; although there are still challenges to be faced with the return of all pupils back to school whilst social distancing measures are in place.

The regional C19 test centre at Taunton Racecourse has been built in 3 days and is now up and running along with 9 mobile sites. National tracing in the last 7 days had resulted in 107 successful traces.

Recycling centres are now open, but unable to take cardboard at this time and non-essential shops are preparing to open on 15th June with some town centre road closures being in place to promote social distancing.

DF also reports that to date, SCC has received £26M from the Government in C19 funding and £6M from the CCG, but has spent £43M resulting in a £10M gap at present.

HV asks DF for an update on School transport. DF responds there is little need for transport for Primary School children, although providing Secondary School transport would be a challenge as 3-4 times the amount of buses would be required if the 2m social distancing rule is kept in place.

DF reports that bus services are currently heavily subsidised to maintain the service, but the advice at present is still not to use public transport.

GG reports that he has queried Hatch Green Bus Company regarding their policy for the number 51 bus route which serves SSG.

Each bus is allocated a specific driver. The bus driver may only allow 5-8 passengers on board, depending on the size of the bus, with all expected to adhere to the 2m rule, including couples.

To-date the number of passengers using this particular service has been below 5 at any one time.

PH enquires whether the increase in tourism to the South-west was causing the upturn in the R rate within Somerset.

DF responds that as Weston-Super-Mare hospital was currently closed for new admissions, this means there is a 25% increase in patients being diverted to Musgrove Park Hospital.

DF continues that as of 1st July 2020 if there is a local flare-up, local authorities will have the power to lock down these areas with the aim of stopping the virus spreading further.

24. Replacement for the grass cutting contract.

The Clerk circulated a report to members of the PC which outlined areas requiring maintenance, cost breakdown and the quotes from 3 local businesses to carry out the works.

Members of the PC considered the Clerks report and recommendation.

HV proposed Sunrise Horticultural Services be appointed as the new contractor. SS seconded, all agreed.

25. The summer newsletter

GG reports that it was a particularly good and informative newsletter and thanked all for their contributions.

26. AGM

GG reports that due to the current Coronavirus situation, SALC advised in April, that the AGM and APM were postponed.

GG asks members of the PC how it would be best to proceed in the absence of the AGM. The options are:

- 1) Reschedule the AGM for when we are able to meet in person

- 2) Hold the AGM by virtual means with the relevant documents distributed for signing
- 3) Propose that the PC agree with the elections of the representatives on committees from the AGM in May 2019 and proceed in these positions until the next scheduled AGM in May 2021

HV recommends that the roles and responsibilities of the committee representatives be circulated and agreed at the next meeting.

KdS to circulate and add item to the next agenda

27. Reports of burning plastic waste

GG reports that concerns have been raised over industrial and personal waste being burned. In particular plastic waste emitting large plumes of black smoke.

CS reports that this has been happening for years, but two weeks ago it was 'outrageous' with huge plumes of black smoke visible from her residence.

HV notes that the concerns have been raised, but the PC have very little power to police such matters.

SS states that the correct route for this concern is to contact the proper administrative bodies.

If members of the public have any concerns over practices that could cause harm to health or the environment, they should report those concerns directly to the Environmental Health Officer at Somerset West and Taunton District Council.

28. Willey Road housing development

GG reports that the suggestion made in the Spring newsletter by Dave Evans, for the street name of the development to be called "Wells Hay" and been very well received.

Only one other suggestion had been made by Tim Slattery, which was to name the Street 'Emrys Coate's view'.

HV responded that it was a lovely suggestion but could lead to complications with the spelling.

NS suggests that it would be a nice gesture to name something after Emrys Coate.

GG proposes that the street name of the housing development be called "Wells Hay" DH seconded, all agreed.

GG to contact the developer, Cllr Stone and SWaT District Council with the proposed name. The PC would also like to thank Tim Slattery for his contribution.

SS reports that the dust and noise from the development recently has been horrendous.

The site has had viewings from potential buyers in the last week.

29. Footpaths

GG reports that the PC has received a correspondence from a member of the public with regards to the public footpath that runs from Stoke St Gregory to Curload.

Concerns were raised over the planting of maize up to and over the footpath, barbed wire over one stile and overgrowth rendering another stile impassable.

These concerns have been raised with the landowner.

CS reports that the headland has been ploughed and planted up to the ditch; not providing 1.5m for the right of way.

The stiles had been improved recently by the farmer, but they were still not ideal and not particularly safe.

CS continues that the original path should go through the field, and the exit stile has been moved 20 metres west and now exits onto a tractor track.

HV responds that this diversion has been in place a substantial amount of time as the original path would lead through the animal sheds.

CS recommends the use of signs to indicate that the footpath does go through the headland, and that the headland is left unploughed and unplanted in the future.

GG reports that the PC contacted the main landowners and farmers prior to the start of the maize planting season to request that the 1.5m was left for the right of way. It has been disappointing that the contractors appear not to have adhered to this request, resulting in the ploughing and planting of the headland; therefore obstructing the footpath.

GG requests that CS collects pre-emptive photographic evidence of these issues in order to present to the landowners and farmers in advance of the planting season next year.

GG recommends more robust measures would need to be taken in the future.

The PC should look for complicity engaging with the landowners and farmers, and co-operating with them. Next spring the PC will request that 1.5m of flat ground is left for the footpath, this area should not include the ditch, this should also prevent people from having to walk on the maize. AF recommends that way marking discs could be placed on the footpaths, with the permission and in agreement with the landowners, to assist with keeping the rights of way clear.

30. Highways

GG reports that the Willey Road will be closed for 1 day on June 17th 2020 for BT works.

AF enquires about the road closure in Meare Green in the coming week.

The Clerk reports that a member of the public had also enquired about access during the works.

When the Clerk contacted the highways department at SCC, she was advised to refer to the one.network website, but that access would still be allowed to properties on the route.

SS asks when Speedwatch will commence again, as there has been an increase of speeding cars, particularly on the Stoke Road.

AF reports that she has received correspondence this week and Speedwatch will commence again as soon as it is possible,, but was restricted at present due to the C19 situation.

31. Allotments

GG requests that this item be removed from the agenda as there has been nothing to report for some time. The allotments are thriving and a very successful addition to the village.

GG recommends that Climate Change Athelney / Environmental issues should be added in its place.

Clerk to amend agenda item for the next meeting.

32. Playing Field

SS reports that the track and car park on the playing fields should be laid this week.

The pavilion should be completed in the next 2 weeks. There has been a substantial amount of work done by the PFMC with regards to fixture and fittings, and it will be opened as soon as current C19 guidelines allow.

SS continues that there has been interest from a local U14 football club to hire the facilities.

GG reports that the tennis courts have now re-opened following C19 guidance from the LTA.

33. Heart of the Village

GG reports that the HOTV elections have now concluded and an elected management committee is now in place.

HV requests that the PC acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the shop staff who have provided an outstanding service for the village throughout these unprecedented times.

GG to write a correspondence to those people involved.

34. Village Website

Nothing to report

35. Broadband

NS reports that approximately a dozen people have contacted him with regards to the broadband service they receive in the village. This will assist in building a knowledge base.

NS requests that members of the public contact him on nick@curloadfarm.co.uk with information of the providers used (BT, RBS, 4G, Satellite), what speed you are receiving, how reliable the service is and where you live so a clear picture may be built of coverage across the Parish.

Once enough information has been gathered, in collaboration with RBS, infrastructure needs can be assessed to ensure everyone has access to a good wireless signal at the very least.

36. Consultations and Surveys

Response for the motion from Cllr. Berman from Wiveliscombe re; Taunton unparished area.

The draft response from the PC is as follows;

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council understands and shares the concern expressed that Taunton Town is an unparished area. As such it is to be presumed that a proportionally higher and unjustified

burden of cost falls upon rural parishes such as ours. Consequently, Stoke St Gregory Parish Council would be grateful to understand what measures will be put in place and on what time-scale that will eventually lead to a rebalancing of the cost burden of services provided by Somerset West and Taunton Council across its entire district."

GG requests that the response be sent to Cllr. Stone and Cllr. Buller with an invitation to comment at the next PC meeting.

Clerk to circulate response and invite the District Councillors for comment. Item to be added to the next agenda.

Response for the draft cycling and walking manifesto

GG reports that in principle, the suggestions made in the manifesto could be generally supported for their intent, but that this was a very aggressive and radical document.

NS adds that it over-reaches and is extreme; it is radical, but movement needs to be taken urgently with some of the issues raised.

DF responds that although he has not seen the document the more radical something is, the more difficult it is to implement.

It was agreed that the PC would not comment on the document.

Clerk to send a copy of the manifesto to DF.

37. Financial Matters

Authorisation of payments

Lexis Nexis – Local Council Administration law book	£103.98
Sunrise Horticultural Services (J. Williams) – Strim/Mow grassed areas 20-05-20	£90.00
Rockwell Print & Sign – Printing of the Summer Newsletter 29-05-20	£63.00
ICO data protection renewal (Cheque No1037)	£40.00
Courtstall (Grant for the tennis court resurfacing + VAT min217 09-03-20)	£2400.00
Standing Order	
01-06-2020 K de Silva – Clerks Salary	£283.33

NS proposed all payments be made, AF seconded, all agreed.

Other financial items

The bank reconciliation to the end of May was circulated by the Clerk and checked by NS.

38. Other items for discussion

The Clerk addresses the e-mail circulated on 07-06-20 attached to which was the Unitarian Authority Proposal feedback form. This was received on 5th June 2020 which was too late to add to the June agenda for discussion.

The deadline is 3rd July 2020. The Clerk has requested an extension on this deadline so the issue may be discussed at the next meeting.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.07pm.

The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 13th July 2020 at 7.30pm.

Please email any items for the agenda to the Clerk (ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk) and the chairman (grahiamgleed@gmail.com) by 3rd July 2020.

