

**STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020**  
**held remotely via Zoom.**

**Present** – Graham Glead (Chairman), Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair), Nick Sloan, Heather Venn, Ann Finn, Janice Pearce, David House, Peter House, John Hembrow, David Fothergill (County Councillor), Phil Stone (District Councillor), Sue Buller (District Councillor)

**In Attendance** – Kelly de Silva

**57. Apologies for absence** – David Fothergill sends apologies for arriving later due attending another PC meeting

**Minutes of the previous meeting** – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were agreed by all to be accurate; and signed by the Chairman.

**Declarations of interests and dispensations** - None

**Public question time** – No members of the public were present and no contributions received.

**58. Planning**

**36/20/0010 The Staddles. Stoke Road, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory** – Change of use from ancillary accommodation to holiday let

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 03/08/2020

**36/20/0008 Coates Willow & Wetlands Centre. Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory** – Erection of 2 No. single storey buildings to be used as Coates English Heritage Centre with relocation of parking area

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 28/07/2020

**36/20/0003 Pincombe Barn. Woodhill Barn, Stoke St Gregory** – Erection of first floor extension and garage

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 28/07/2020

*(AF Joins the meeting)*

**36/20/0013 Green Gables. Curload Road, Curload, Stoke St Gregory** – Installation of 36 No. ground mounted solar panels on 4 No frames on land to the side of dwelling

The following response was agreed by the PC;

*“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council supports this application as it is important to encourage green energy”*

*It was agreed items 59 – Covid 19 & 60 – Unitarian Authority Proposal would be deferred until the arrival of DF.*

**61. Refuse bin request for the burial ground**

NS reports that he has spoken to the member of the public who requested a refuse bin for the burial ground. The member of the public expressed disappointment when learning it would not be viable. NS has spoken to the church warden, who also saw it as unviable.

HV highlighted that even if the PC could supply a bin, the measures required to ensure waste is disposed correctly were complex, and people should be responsible to take their waste home with them.

GG states that the options to install a refuse bin would be expensive and unsustainable.

**62. Remembrance Sunday event planning**

GG informs that it is VJ day on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August. Shaun Street has very kindly agreed to play the bugle (sunset post) at the playing field memorial stone on Saturday at 8.20pm.

JP states that this will be live streamed on social media, similar to VE day.

JP suggests that in lieu of the VE day celebrations, which could not go ahead this year due to the C-19 restrictions, a memorial plaque could be made instead and installed at the pavilion.

SS responds the idea of a plaque would be well received by the PFMC.

GG informs that he has been contacted by the Church Warden proposing the memorial stone be re-located from the entrance of the playing fields to a position close to the pavilion enabling outdoor services to take place in a more suitable location.

SS reminds of previous discussions pertaining to relocation of the memorial stone, and she strongly believes it is situated in the right place.

PH agrees the stone is already located in the right place; as it raises awareness when people enter the playing field they are entering a living memorial. HV adds she is in agreement with PH.

AF also agrees that the stone is in the correct location and enquires if there is a list of those who fell / fought in the war, JH informs that this is available in the church.

SS responds the list may be incomplete, but the memorial stone is to remember all who fought; not only those who fell.

DH states that the Parish had previously decided the location of the memorial stone before it was laid.

GG proposes that the PC strongly believe the memorial stone should not be re-located and agree a memorial plaque could be placed at the pavilion.

JH questions what the inscription will be on the plaque before agreeing to it.

GG recommends speaking to the PFMC for their input, NS suggests also including the Church warden and JH in the discussions involving the inscription and location.

HV urges the messaging conveys the exceptional nature of the memorial.

SS recommends the remembrance service itself would be for the Church, the Baptist chapel and the PFMC to arrange.

GG notes there would probably be insufficient time and means to re-locate the memorial stone ahead of the Remembrance Day service.

### **63. PC form to support local applicants for affordable housing**

NS reports he has been approached by 2 members of the community claiming that Greenslade Taylor Hunt (GTH) stipulated their application for affordable housing on the new development must be accompanied by a form issued by the PC which confirms their eligibility for such housing because they are members of the local community. NS expresses that there may be some confusion with GTH on the matter.

SS reports that although she has no experience of subsidised housing in her professional role, there may be a requirement to prove a local connection, but GTH should supply the forms they are requesting.

NS enquires which criteria constitutes as evidence of eligibility. SS responds applicants should have lived in the village for longer than 6 months, have family connections or a carer – there are many criteria.

DH states the allocation of affordable housing should be treated the same as when Polkesfield properties went on the market – local people should have preference.

HV ask if the PC submitted a list of those who were interested in the affordable housing. GG responds that there was a list in the old village shop where residents could register their interest.

HV states that this was a long time ago, and circumstances change.

SS suggests there will be an application process in order to ascertain each applicant's eligibility. Clerk to contact GTH to attain process information.

GG reports that this is the end of the red section of the meeting but refers to an e-mail circulated from the chair of the school governors with regards to recent school improvements. GG requests the item be added to the agenda for the next meeting for discussion.

Clerk to add School improvements to the September agenda.

#### **64. Willey road Housing Development**

DH reports that the housing development has been named Broomfield Park by the developer. DH expresses concern that there is already a Broomfield Park in the Quantocks and another in Taunton. This could lead to confusion and it should be marketed as Wells Hay.

SS states that it is common practice for developers to name the development and market it, changing the name is one of the final processes once the development has been finished.

*(DF Joins the meeting)*

*It is agreed to return to the items deferred earlier in the meeting*

#### **59. Covid 19**

DF reports that up to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020, there have been 1,308 confirmed cases of Coronavirus. Currently there are on average 7-8 confirmed new cases per week, 201 tragic deaths reported, with latest figures showing no new deaths in care homes.

There is currently only 1 person in Musgrove Hospital receiving ventilation and the R rate is around the 0.8-1 figure, but this changes constantly.

DF continues that the 5-year average death rate in Somerset is 12% below anticipated figures. He also reports that SCC now have an outbreak management plan in place – with the power to close premises, open spaces and ban live events in the event of an outbreak; similar to those procedures followed in Preston, Leeds and Aberdeen.

#### **60. Unitary Authority Proposal**

DF reports the proposal is the result of a two-and-a-half-year conversation with District Councils. With the business case from SCC being approved; it has now been submitted to the Secretary of State.

DF continues that the timing of this is critical due to the Covid situation and economic recovery.

District is yet to put forward a business case, but it is anticipated there will be discussion around this in the next 24 hours.

Whilst the SCC business case is being considered, it will continue to be developed.

GG asks PS and SB if they have any comment to make on the subject.

PS states he has nothing to add at present and will wait until after tomorrow's meeting with the Districts until he passes further comment.

SB responds that although she is ambivalent with regards to the proposal, she will make a decision and comment once she has considered the facts and figures which she anticipates will be presented at the upcoming District meeting.

SB informs she has witnessed mixed feelings on the proposals from attending other Parish Council meetings and also from those in voluntary office.

GG requests the item remains on the agenda.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

#### **65. Footpaths**

AF updates the PC that she has received a template from SCC Rights of Way Officers for a Section 25 and Section 30 of the Highways Act 1980 regarding the issues raised at the last two previous Parish Council meetings which relate to the obstructions on Footpath T25/27 and the cleared diversion of the route. For the Parish Council to proceed any further, confirmation of land ownership with proof of deeds is required.

HV reports that she and AF have been communicating with the farmer to reach a resolution; HV requests the Clerk contact the Farmer to ascertain land ownership of the fields in question.

Clerk to compile a correspondence and circulate to the Council before sending to the farmer.

GG reports that he has received comments from three members of the public regarding the footpath from the Willows & Wetlands Centre towards land owned by JH.

They have commented that the footpath has not been strimmed and becoming difficult to walk.

AF responds that she had walked the aforementioned footpath only last week, and although it is not a city footpath, it is still possible to navigate.

JH cites no obligation for the landowner to strim the footpath and that SCC should maintain it – but SCC do not have the manpower to do this.

HV adds that a well walked route will maintain itself.

AF reports whilst recently walking through Stanmoor Mead Drove on Footpath T25/23 she was met with the obstruction of an electric fence and single bullock. This blocked the route and she had no other alternative than to turn back.

HV reports that this has been an issue before on this right of way and the issue should be delegated to the footpath officer CS to investigate.

GG to inform CS of the issue to pursue.

SS reports that the Chairman of the Playing fields has been in discussion with Cecil Boobyer with regards to access at the gate at Church Close and also making access safer on the route out of the playing fields at the top left hand corner.

## **66. Highways**

AF reports the PC has received two correspondences relating to speeding issues in Meare Green.

After C19 restrictions were lifted Speedwatch has been able to resume and as such conducted one session last week with another planned next week. AF adds with more walkers and cyclists on the road, maybe it is time for the issue of the speed limit in Meare Green to be re-visited.

SS refers to an e-mail circulated by the Clerk reporting figures issued by the North Curry Speedwatch team which reported over 50% of vehicles were driving above the 30 MPH limit.

SS suggests the need to be more inventive at reducing the speed limit as in North Curry speed limit reduction measures are not having the desired effect.

GG states the speed limit is 30 MPH until Denman's Hill, with it increasing to 40 MPH through Meare Green. Analysis of current available figures show that few cars are exceeding 40 MPH at present, but there is a need to appraise this data to include traffic and the speed which it is travelling between 30-40 MPH.

AF states that 40 MPH is too fast for this particular stretch of road with all of the walkers and cyclists, it is also a residential area; if the speed limit were 30 MPH then it wouldn't be an issue.

HV questions the suitability of the location of the Speedwatch equipment and suggests one resolution to the problem would be to have street lighting along Meare Green.

PH questions if there is sufficient density of housing along Meare Green to be able to implement of 30MPH speed limit and asks why it was turned down before.

AF reminds that the PC voted against a change in the speed limit approximately 5 years ago.

DF explains the speed limit of a road is complex, with a natural speed for some roads. The road users of this particular stretch of road will be predominantly used by the residents of Stoke St Gregory, if they feel comfortable driving through Meare Green at 40 MPH, they will continue to do so.

DF continues, for a 30MPH speed limit to be implemented, a certain density of housing needs to be achieved. There is an option of radar boxes but exact locations for these to be installed on telegraph poles and speed signs would need to be discussed.

DH recommends waiting for the outcome of the next series of Speedwatch figures and then discuss options.

NS recommends publishing a short article in the next edition of Stoke News, and including it in the PC report to understand the opinions of the local community on the matter.

AF to collate the Speedwatch figures of those driving above 30MPH as well as 40MPH, Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

## **67. Environmental Issues / Climate change Athelney**

GG refers to the recent Reversing the Decline of Insects report from The Wildlife Trust that was circulated to

the PC and asks what actions the PC can take to identify areas that could be promoted as an insect friendly habitat.

GG recommends approaching the Footpath Officer as she has a keen interest in the subject.

NS recommends an article in the Stoke News with a link to the report and recommendations from the Somerset Wildlife Trust.

GG requests the item is added to the next agenda.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

SS suggests the PC promote the 'Do not mow May' initiative that also supports insect recovery.

HV reports she has been contacted by a member of the public about a non-native species of Apple Thorn growing in the area. HV has discussed this with the landowner who is now dealing with the issue.

GG reports that a significant amount of time has now passed since the transfer of the allotments to the PC was agreed and a formal arrangement should now be approached.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

## **12. Playing Field**

SS reports work on the pavilion is complete and they have received the first booking for a birthday party in September - C19 restrictions permitting.

Unfortunately, there have been an increasing number of antisocial behaviour incidents occurring in the playing field; such as children lighting a fire in the copse of trees requiring 3 fire extinguishers and a bucket of water to dampen the fire which subsequently has caused damage to the trees, and late night visitors having barbecues despite the grass being extremely dry due the recent spell of good weather.

SS continues there have been reports of visitors in the early hours of the morning and as a result the gates will now be locked in the evenings.

DH states he has recently visited the pavilion and has concerns over the building's accessibility because both entrances to the building have steps.

SS responds this could not be avoided due to the gradient of the slope at the front of the building, but the PFMC are aware of the issue and once income is generated once again the issue can be addressed with portable ramps.

GG reports that the PC has an expenditure for small grants that may be available to assist issues such as this in light of the PFMC generating no income but still having outgoings during the C19 pandemic.

PH queries why the camping vehicle that was recently parked on the playing field has now been permitted to park in the village hall car park.

GG responds that the inhabitant of the vehicle is working locally and paying a nominal fee to the Village Hall to park there.

HV questions whether it is appropriate that the village hall car park should be used for residential use.

Although the outdoor space is used by South West Campers, they hire and use the facilities of the village hall; and allowing someone to park in the car park goes against the PFMC asking them to move the vehicle.

GG responds that he is unable to speak on the behalf of the village hall committee but agrees there should be no overnight camping allowed unless they have hired / using the facilities of the hall.

## **69. Heart of the Village / Shop in a box**

NS reports that although there was hope to complete the purchase of the Royal Oak by the end of July, there is anticipation that the purchase will complete in the coming week.

## **70. Village Website**

Nothing to report

## **71. Broadband**

NS reports that RBS has a five year contract with BT for providing bandwidth from the national backbone. This was facilitated by the Chedzoy PC.

There may be an upcoming issue with this, and NS proposes sending an e-mail he drafted and circulated to

the PC which requests the link is maintained until the expiration of the BT contract. NS asks if there are any objections to his proposed correspondence. There were no objections.

NS continues he started a survey in the last edition of the Stoke News to collect information on local bandwidth. He has received approximately 25 replies, all of which maintain most people are not experiencing many issues. The current wireless network is running at capacity.

NS reports he has spoken to a resident of Huntham who has been approached by BT for an upgrade. This is most likely to be via a 4G hub as the property is some distance from the cabinet – suggesting that BT is more concerned with sales than it is with robust service.

NS informs that Chedzoy now has Truespeed but this is at a premium price when compared to wireless which is roughly half the price. This could mean that Truespeed may be available in the village in the future.

## **72. Consultations and Surveys.**

GG reports that although there are no consultations this month, after revisiting the LGA consultation on the new code of conduct model from the previous meeting, there is an underlying survey which is more about individual opinions. GG requests the Councillors complete the survey independently.

HV enquires whether a combined submission from the PC was required; NS informs that it is a model for the code of conduct which can be tailored and adopted accordingly.

## **73. Financial Matters**

### **Standing Order**

01-08-20 K de Silva – Clerks Salary	£283.33
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### **Payments for Authorisation**

<b>Reimbursement</b> to K de Silva – Secure postage of requested documents	£7.50
G Wagen & James – Strim & Mow burial ground Invoice 2375	£72.00
G Wagen & James – Strim & Mow burial ground Invoice 2389	£72.00
G Wagen & James – Strim & Mow burial ground Invoice 2335	£72.00
Josh Williams – Sunrise Horticultural Services Strim & Mow	£90.00
St Johns Ambulance – Replacement defibrillator pads and battery	£405.40

GG proposes all payments are made, HV seconded and all agreed.

### **Other Financial Items**

Bank reconciliation to the end of July checked by GG

The Clerk reports that on submitting the AGAR to the external auditor PKF Littlejohn, SSG PC has been chosen as part of the random 5% of authorities to receive an intermediate audit. All requested additional documentation has been sent by the Clerk and confirmation received that the AGAR is now being processed.

The Clerk reports that she has recently sent an e-mail to GG, SS and NS to report ongoing issues with the PC laptop.

The Clerk sought advice and has installed new drivers but the issues have not improved, impeding her work. The advice received is that the processor is over 6 years old. A new hard drive and a fresh install of windows 10 could be an option; but as there is no Windows 10 OEM sticker this would also need to be purchased leading to a combined cost of roughly £230. If this did not solve the issues then a new laptop would be required. Cost efficiencies are paramount, as such the best solution may be to purchase a new laptop. The current laptop is also unable to facilitate Zoom, so the Clerk is having to borrow one to attend the

meetings.

The PC agreed unanimously that the best option would be for a new laptop to be purchased.  
Clerk to devise a report of the best options that would be fit for purpose and cost effective to present for authorisation to purchase.

#### **74. Other Items for Discussion**

GG reports the period of agreed time to offset a payment to reserve a plot in the burial ground for a member of the community has almost expired and payment should now be requested.  
Clerk to write and inform the Parishioner

AF reports that she has experienced an issue with a neighbouring property discarding grass cuttings in the ditch at the rear of her land. This ditch also contains the non-native species Himalayan Balsam and requests the resident be asked to deposit cuttings elsewhere and remove the invasive species from the ditch.  
AF to discuss with the landowner

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.12pm.

**The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 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 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020.**