

## STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 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, Phil Stone (District Councillor), David Fothergill (County Councillor)

**In Attendance** – Kelly de Silva and 2 members of the public

**75. 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 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were agreed by all to be accurate; and signed by the Chairman.

**Declarations of interests and dispensations** - None

**Public question time** – One member of the public was in attendance to discuss their concerns regarding the fan extraction system that has recently been installed at the school.

Prior to the installation there was no consultation or information provided to neighbouring properties; the resident's property is immediately next to the school and a member of this household is extremely vulnerable.

They have consulted with a plumber who informed them the extraction system will be clearing the air in the classroom. They are concerned that the air vent louvers aim straight at their property and there is concern that the louvers could expel hazardous airborne contamination towards their residence. Considering the severe vulnerability of a member of the household they have felt compelled to close windows and doors whilst the fans are working from 8.45am to 5.45pm and are feeling extremely hesitant to use their patio area.

They state they have been in isolation for the duration of the pandemic and as C19 cases rise again, they are close to self-isolating once more – throughout these times their home and garden are their sanctuary.

They have tried to discuss this with the school, but no solution was formed.

The resident requests the PC to inspect the vents and share their views on the situation.

GG explains he has every sympathy with the residents, considering the vulnerability of household.

GG continues that the installation of the extraction unit was regarded a vital key improvement to the school but agreed the PC would engage with the School for further investigation.

PH states the need for more details would need to be attained around the purpose, output and level of filtration of the extraction system.

SS and HV both agree that this should be dealt with by the education authority at Somerset County Council, which carried out the works.

GG agrees to seek advice on the extraction system, establish the facts and escalate the issue as appropriate.

*(One member of the public leaves)*

GG reports that there have been 2 contributions from members of the public not in attendance.

Firstly, a resident has reported their dog was confronted by another dog not on a lead on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020 in the field between Polkesfield and the Church.

They report this is the second altercation with this specific dog and would like the PC to have the incident on record.

GG informs the PC has limited powers regarding dog control. Incidences of dog attacks should be reported to the dog warden; and dog owners have a duty to keep dogs under control and on a lead if required.

GG adds that this item will appear in the PC report requesting dog owners to act responsibly.

Secondly, a resident ordered a green garden waste bin 10 weeks ago and has not received it. PS informs that this will be an issue for the District council and agrees to investigate the delivery of the bin on behalf of the resident.

A member of the public was present to discuss the proposed speed limit reduction in Meare Green. They state that during previous discussions regarding the housing development along Willey Road the point was raised that more housing would bring an increase in the volume of traffic on the road. They report being impressed with the traffic calming measures in North Curry- road users are left in no doubt that the village are taking speeding seriously. This makes Stoke St Gregory look rather unfavourable, with tatty and overgrown speed signage, and with more walkers, pedestrians and cyclists than ever before using the road the subject of speeding has never been more important. They report cars are regularly exceeding 40 MPH along Meare Green. A reduction in the speed limit would be most welcome.

GG responds the PC has received an overwhelming response in support from residents for a reduction of the speed limit in Meare Green from a 40 MPH to 30 MPH.

He continues that North Curry Parish Council had considerably more funds available to them to introduce the traffic calming measures; money that SSG PC do not currently have.

GG informs that the item will be discussed in further detail later in the meeting.

## **76. Planning**

**36/20/0015/LB. The Laurels. Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory** – Internal alterations and installation of 3 No. velux windows to the rear single storey roof.

GG reports he visited the site as a representative of the PC to minimise the amount of people present in-line with C19 restrictions.

Planning permission is required as it is a listed building, although the planned works are part of an extension that was not part of the original building. The works are low profile, low key and would have no impact on neighbouring properties.

Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed the following response.

*“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support this planning application.”*

## **77. Covid 19**

In the absence of DF, GG reports where cases had previously dropped in Somerset, there has now been a recent significant increase in cases. Although the numbers are not equal to the peak of cases earlier in the year, there is still a very real risk.

GG continues new law on the rule of 6 was clear, but further clarification is required on some issues such as organised sports.

Somerset has been in a privileged position, with lower case numbers than other areas of the UK but there is no room for complacency.

SS adds that Covid 19 cases are on the rise in the County.

SS reports she has been left shocked by the complacency of some parents at the school -standing shoulder to shoulder and talking face to face for extended periods of time, forcing other footpath users to walk on the road in order to maintain social distancing. Covid is virulent; people must not be naïve of this; they must be careful and have a duty to act responsibly and with consideration for other members of the community.

## **78. Unitarian Authority Proposal**

GG reports that since the last PC meeting the four authorities have released the “Stronger Somerset” business case. The executive summaries of both the One Somerset and the Stronger Somerset are similar – they are difficult to discern, as they both have the same benefits.

DH states that after attending a recent committee meeting there appeared to be more members in favour of a single authority.

PS reports that the One Somerset proposal would only allow for 100 Councillors, this would mean larger wards with bigger issues – there would be a need to increase Councillor expenses from £3,000 – furthermore the investment of time required to accommodate such an increased volume of work would be far greater than it is currently.

With two authorities it would allow for twice as many Councillors.

PS continues that District have greater contact with constituents and offer a wider range of services than County.

PS expresses concern neither business case covers education in much depth.

PS believes two authorities would be better than one that stretched from Frome to Minehead, a journey itself that would take over two hours.

GG asks how the issue will be resolved.

PS responds that the Government will decide on the presented business cases, both bids could be considered valid and it may go to consultation – a referendum would be unlikely.

PS continues it appears Government would prefer Unitary Authorities throughout the Country. If the One Somerset proposal were accepted a shadow authority would be in place by May 2021 with elections the following year.

GG asks the Parish Council for their views.

DH states that SALC (Somerset Association for Local Councils) should be pressed for greater representation of Local Councils on the subject.

GG refers to June’s SALC report which included recommendations on the role of Parish Councils in the event of Local Government Reorganisation in Somerset and advises that SALC should be contacted to discern their current position on the issue and for advice.

PS agrees SALC should take more of a role of involvement.

*(DF joins the meeting)*

PH states it appears that District is attempting to maintain the status quo.

DF adds more information on the business cases will be released shortly.

## **79. School Improvements**

GG reports he has spoken to the Head Mistress at the School who has informed the works have been completed on the ventilation and the roof with toilet works still ongoing.

There has still been no allocation of central CIL money, despite suggestions by Rebecca Powell that a bid could be made – however this has proved fruitless thus far.

GG continues there is a reluctance to allocate the PC proportion of the CIL money to the School as this should be funded by County.

HV agrees capital funding for the School should be an issue between the School and County Council.

GG reports that an e-mail circulated 10-08-20 from the Chair of Governors for the School refers to a report that has not been seen by the PC, consequentially any information contained in that report cannot be included in today's discussion.

DF states he will seek approval to release the report to the PC.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

### **80. Playing Field War Memorial and Proposed Plaque**

NS reports he has circulated the latest design the plaque for the Pavilion, which has been received well.

NS continues the Stoke Stampede accounts for at least half of the annual income for the PFMC, and due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, it would be highly unlikely the event could be held in January 2021.

Considering this, the PFMC are looking for assistance with the funding of the plaque. As the plaque is for the village and will be a focal point for the Remembrance Service in November, NS requests a contribution from the PC.

GG confirms the quoted cost for casting the plaque would be £305 + VAT.

NS has designed the plaque and offered his time to do this at no charge.

HV proposes the PC pay the full cost of casting the plaque as NS has not charged for his work on the project. JP seconded the motion.

PH enquires where the plaque will be located on the pavilion building and asks if it would appear too large.

NS responds the plaque will be mounted on a large brick area.

It is imperative the plaque does not look too diminutive – it will resemble a 'blue plaque' in size but will be coloured in GWR (Great Western Railway) colours as a nod to the origin of the old pavilion.

### **81. Legal Status of the Allotments transfer to the PC**

GG reports the allotments are currently owned by the Willey Road Housing developer.

The contract between the developer and previous landowner stipulates the allotments must be handed to the PC, however before this can happen the finalisation of the transition zone behind the houses on Church Close must be completed. Only then can the allotments be handed over.

SS enquires about the current issues with rats in the allotment.

GG responds he believes this is primarily due to the maize growing next to the allotment as this is a food source for the rodents, but rat traps have been put in place.

### **82. Village Directory / Welcome Pack**

GG reports Ian Upshall has completed a very well compiled and comprehensive 30-page welcome pack for new residents of the village.

SS expresses concern that 30 pages may be too comprehensive.

GG asks members of the PC to read the document and respond with any comments in the coming days.

GG to circulate the document for feedback from the PC

### **83. Request for re-location of the defibrillator.**

The Clerk reports she received a request from the current homeowner that the Defibrillator is removed from its current location at the former Village Store.

Given the Village Store is currently on the market as a residential property it would make most sense to re-locate the unit to the Royal Oak as the defibrillator requires a trickle feed to keep the battery charged and it would remain in a central, accessible location.

GG reports he has spoken to the electrician about the relocation from outside the former Village store to the Royal Oak.

NS expresses concern it would currently be unsafe for the power to be left on at the Royal Oak whilst works are being under-taken, so the unit could not be relocated immediately.

HV recommends asking the owners / purchasers of the residence if the defibrillator can remain in the location until safe to relocate to the Royal Oak.

**GG to discuss with the involved parties.**

#### **84. Travelling Post Office**

GG reports the Travelling Post Office carried out a survey on the conference room in the village hall to assess its suitability as a location. All is satisfactory to go ahead with the service.

GG continues that initially the Travelling Post Office will be open for 2 hours on a Thursday morning. Depending on footfall, there could be an option to increase the hours of the service to include Tuesday mornings also.

PH enquires about the services the travelling Post Office will offer to the community.

GG responds the service would not be able to offer the Foreign Exchange, but all other services provided by the Post Office including cash / cheque deposits can be offered.

#### **85. Willey Road Housing Development**

GG informs the developer of the Housing development has reported a considerable upturn in the level of interest for the houses since a marketing article was published in the Somerset Gazette.

PS states the hedge on the Willey Road should have been cut before it was moved and as such has not grown back and is looking rather unpleasant.

**GG to register this concern with the developer.**

#### **86. Footpaths**

GG reports there is still the ongoing issue regarding a member of the public reporting an obstruction caused by maize on Footpath T25/27 with 2 opposing views on the accessibility.

GG has engaged with the member of the public and agreed to walk the route with them to assess the access issue.

The issue of the building is administrative and will be dealt with via the proper channels.

**Clerk to add the item to the next agenda**

GG reports a recent incident where heifers jumped over the stile leading into the playing fields. The landowner has attempted to bolster the stile by adding a piece of wood in order to increase the height of the stile, however this extra height now renders the stile too high for easy access, therefore obstructing the public right of way and forcing some residents to walk along the Willey & Stoke Roads.

PS suggests the installation of a wooden kissing gate as these have been a success after approximately 20 of them were installed in North Curry.

SS asks if the extra piece of wood could be on a hinge. GG responds the landowner may be reluctant to accommodate this.

AF states that George Montague at SCC Rights of way should be informed of the situation.

SS recommends the chairman of the playing fields committee could engage in conversation with the landowner to come to a resolution of the problem.

SS to speak to NS with regards to making the stile safe and accessible.

### **87. Highways**

The Clerk reports there has been an overwhelming response to the article in the Autumn Stoke Newsletter which sought to engage the community regarding a possible review of the current 40 MPH speed limit in Meare Green.

The Clerk has received 20 responses all supporting a reduction in the speed limit with only one response suggesting it would be a noble endeavour but questioned whether people would adhere to it. There has also been a significant number of residents commenting on cyclists travelling 2 abreast on the road, which could also be unsafe.

SS states that even though she is in support for changing the current speed limit from 40 MPH to 30 MPH, the road has a natural speed to it, and the move will require more than signage.

AF adds she posted a letter to the residents of Meare Green requesting their support to the article in the Stoke Newsletter.

GG responds he is not surprised by the overwhelming response and asks DF about the speed reduction measures that are in place in Creech, as these appear to be successful and asks if it was a PC or County initiative.

DF states this was implemented before his time in his position.

PS adds the measures in Creech were installed well over a decade ago.

DF recommends contacting the Highways Traffic Management department at SCC to enquire about the installation of radar boxes to attain a true reflection of the speeding issues on the road.

AF refers to a response from a resident containing information on how a reduction in speed massively increases a pedestrian's chances of survival in the event of a collision, and this should be a consideration given the number of residents in Meare Green and the increasing number of small children in the area.

GG responds it is obvious residents feel the 40 MPH speed is too great and would the PC wish to allocate the CIL money to put measures in place to reduce the speed limit.

NS states it would be perverse not to respond due to the support the suggestion has received but he is vigorously opposed to speedbumps and chicanes along the road.

DF informs from his experience residents are not impressed with speed bumps outside their houses and the police would also have to agree to a change in the speed limit.

PH adds the extension of the 30 MPH speed limit from Holly Farm to the Sewage Works would feel less than the natural speed of the road, so it may be hard to enforce. PH continues cyclists travelling 2 abreast is perfectly legal, 3 abreast is not.

HV adds the radar boxes have been used before but were not allocated on the straight stretch of road therefore producing inconclusive evidence.

A member of the public is permitted to speak by the Chairman.

They ask DF if the radar boxes take into account the volume and nature of the traffic using the road and questions why if it is possible to install speed reduction measures in Fivehead, why it cannot be done in Meare Green.

DF responds the radar boxes do not record traffic volume and vehicle types.

GG proposes the PC contact Traffic Management at SCC to conduct a case test review of the speed limit to press forward with a possible speed limit reduction in Meare Green. AF seconds the motion, all were in favour.

**Clerk to correspond with Traffic Management to request the installation of radar boxes.**

AF reports that since C19 restrictions were lifted, there has been 6 speed watch sessions in Meare Green.

Most vehicles were recorded at between 30-40 MPH with a handful exceeding 40 MPH.

AF adds when drivers see the speed watch team in high visibility clothing (which is required) people instantly lower their speed so the figures are not a true reflection of the problem.

### **88. Climate / Environmental Issues**

GG refers to the Reversing Insect Decline document issued by The Somerset Wildlife Trust and asks how the PC can encourage insect habitat. GG seeks to understand if there is any sentiment to promote this on PC managed land.

SS reports the PFMC are having discussions about the possibility of leaving two areas of the Playing Field to grow wild to assist with the biodiversity for insect habitat.

SS suggests the PC could purchase Bee Bombs for the children of the village to promote wildflower growth.

PS responds these are better used on land prepared for sowing rather than on mature grassland areas.

DH suggests making the first cut on grassed areas maintained by the PC later next spring and leaving the bank opposite the village hall to promote insect habitat.

**Clerk to add this item to the agenda in Spring**

GG announces the PC has received a request for support from The Somerset Wildlife Trust & Somerset Climate Action, asking the PC to support their application to the Somerset Climate Emergency Community Fund in order to fund two new job posts; a Somerset Climate and Nature Networkers Coordinator and a Somerset Local Nature Partnership Manager.

GG responds that although the PC agree in principle to the application, it is preferred the funds available are spent on actions rather than people.

DF adds that the Somerset Climate Emergency Community Fund is a SCC initiative aimed at Communities to realise a substantial reduction in carbon footprint. SCC are expecting a great number of applications from Town and Parish Councils.

GG reports the Climate Emergency Homepage has all the details of the application process and opens on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

HV recommends the School and Pre-School should be informed of the funding as they have been actively promoting wildlife areas and this initiative may benefit from extra funding.

GG suggests applications to the fund could be made by the HOTV for solar panels on the Royal Oak and heat pumps for insulation.

SS also suggests the new Pavilion could benefit from the installation of Solar Panels from the fund.

GG requests details of the Fund are circulated via the Clerk and are included in the PC report in order to invite the submission of applications to the PC before the next meeting.

### **89. Playing Field**

SS reports football has now commenced on the playing field with rules in place to adhere to Covid secure regulations.

SS continues that it is important people remember the rule of 6 when using the Playing Fields.

SS informs that with the Stoke Stampede looking very unlikely to go ahead in January, this will have a hugely negative impact on the PFMC finances.

SS reports that on a happier note, local participant and winner of the Stoke Stampede, Hannah Taunton has recently broken the world record in the Women's T20 5000m with a time of 17:17.30 minutes.

The PC would like to extend their congratulations to Hannah on an amazing achievement.

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

NS reports there is a huge amount of work underway at the Royal Oak with the aim of having the shop installed by the end of October.

A full brief on the HOTV work can be found on the village website.

### **91. Village Website**

Nothing to report

### **92. Broadband**

Nothing to report

### **93. Consultations and Surveys**

#### **Changes to the Current Planning System and Transparency and competition: Data and Land Control**

It was agreed both the above consultations are far too comprehensive and require a level of expertise above that of Local Council volunteers.

#### **Consultation on White Paper: Planning for the Future**

GG proposes answering the survey and circulating the response to the PC for consideration at the next PC meeting (Deadline 15-10-20)

**Clerk to add the item to the next PC meeting**

#### **River Sowe and Kings Sedgemoor Drain Enhancement Scheme Phase 1**

The Clerk reports the consultation was only open for 30 days which fell between PC meetings. The Clerk requested an extension of the deadline, but she was advised that responses could still be e-mailed after the deadline.

GG asks PH and HV if they would be willing to respond on behalf of the PC due to their expertise in this field.

PH agreed to look at the proposals and respond if required.

### **94. Financial Matters**

#### **Standing Order**

01-09-20 K de Silva – Clerks Salary	£283.33
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#### **Payments for Authorisation**

SLCC Annual Membership	£92.00
Rockwell Print & Sign – Printing of the August Newsletter	£63.00
J Williams – Sunrise Horticultural Services – Strim/Mow & hedge cutting in the Burial Ground	£250.00

GG proposes all payments are made, HV seconds the motion, all were in favour

Bank reconciliation to the end of August checked by GG



SS will complete the bank reconciliation checks submitted by the Clerk over the next period.

The new laptop has been authorised and purchased as per Minute 73 and the Clerk has been reimbursed the sum of £362.48. The receipts were included in the August bank reconciliation.

#### **95. Other Items for discussion**

The Clerk reports G Wagen and James contacted her to report hedge trimmings on the Burial Ground side that had come from a neighbouring property.

G Wagen and James did not feel it was their responsibility to remove them and they are impacting the aesthetics of their work.

**GG to mention to the residents of the neighbouring property**

The Clerk reports on a recent visit to the Burial Ground she had noticed a large gap in the wall in the area for the interment of ashes.

JH informed that this area was maintained by the PCC and they may be aware as there have been subsidence issues in the past.

**Clerk to contact PCC to raise the issue**

With recent new guidance regarding Covid rules, PC meetings will continue to be held remotely for the foreseeable future.

As DF was not present for the Covid Section of the meeting he would like to report that in the last 2.5 weeks there has been a five-fold increase in new C19 cases in Somerset.

There are currently 160 year 7 students and 200 Year 11 students away from one school due to a confirmed C19 case in each year. A nursery is also closed.

Numbers of C19 cases are increasing significantly and at pace, and we in Somerset are on a knife edge.

NS has been asked by a member of the public if a shipping container on agricultural land to house feed would require planning permission.

It is advised the resident seek advice from the local planning authority at SWaT.

SS has been asked if there is any more that the PC can do about the recycling of plastic.

**Clerk to add the item to the next agenda**

SS reports there have been several comments about the deterioration of the Phone Box at the entrance of the playing fields.

GG responds the Scouts no longer wished to pursue the project, although a member of the community has shown some enthusiasm to take the project on.

SS adds there would be several people willing to assist with transforming the defunct phone box if someone could take the lead.

**GG to discuss the project with the member of the community**

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.23pm.

**The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 7.30pm. Please email any items for the agenda to the Clerk ([ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)) and the chairman ([grahiamgleed@gmail.com](mailto:grahiamgleed@gmail.com)) by 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.**