

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 12th October 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, Sue Buller (District Councillor), David Fothergill (County Councillor)

In Attendance – Kelly de Silva

96. Apologies for absence – Phil Stone (District Councillor) David Fothergill will be arriving later due to attending another PC meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 14th September 2020 were agreed by all to be accurate; and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of interests and dispensations – PH asks for clarification if he should declare an interest in planning application 36/20/0019 as the installation of the bulk feed bins will affect the view from his residence. HV advises that he would still be able to contribute to the conversation. PH takes the decision to abstain from any voting.

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

GG requests that item 3 COVID 19 is delayed in the meeting until the arrival of DF.

97. Planning

36/20/0019 – Slough Court, Slough Lane, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of 5 No. bulk feed bins and silage clamps (retention of works already undertaken)
Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed the following response:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council would offer no comment on Planning Application 36/20/0019, however during the discussion of this submission, concerns were expressed around the visibility of these silos due to their height, and as a consequence whether there could be mitigation in the form of screening or even reorientation of the proposed layout.”

36/20/0021/AGN Meare Green Farm, Frog Lane, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory – Application for the prior notification for the erection of an agricultural building for storage

Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed the following response:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support planning application 36/20/0021/AGN as it will improve the aspect of the current building and reduce wastage”

SB informs the PC that a recent report into the run-off of phosphates has led to a number of agricultural planning application decisions being postponed at recent planning meetings. District Councillors were only informed last week about a letter which was received in August concerning this.

SB reports that herself and Phil Stone are working together on a document on the subject which will be published in the near future.

98. Unitarian Authority Proposal

GG reports there is a feeling of being swept along with little control over the Unitarian Authority proposals. SSG PC comments will have little or no influence on the outcome. A recent publication from One Somerset compared the two proposals - from One Somerset and Stronger Somerset – however this document has a degree of bias; it represents the business case well but there are gaps and leaves many questions unanswered.

GG states there is a concern that Parish Councils will be the recipients of what is to come.

GG agrees he will attend the virtual meeting being held this week by One Somerset.

SS informs the Government has chosen Somerset as one of three Unitarian Authority proposals to be considered.

(DF joins the meeting)

NS states he does not trust the published infographic on the subject.

SS asks DF if there is the possibility of a consultation with the residents of the County. DF responds The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has invited the leaders in Somerset to submit their cases for change by the 9th November 2020; the Secretary of State will decide on the next outcomes.

SB adds The Stronger Somerset Proposal could have been more precise but at the time the District Council were focusing on supporting local communities and businesses through the Coronavirus pandemic.

99. School Improvements

GG requests this item is deferred until the next PC meeting as a lengthy and somewhat technical report was only released to the PC earlier today.

HV states that she is not convinced the content of the report is a PC issue and that it should be between the School and County Council.

GG agrees the PC has no executive power with regards to the school.

SS enquires whether Burrowbridge Parish Council are having similar discussions concerning the school improvements and funding, as there are families in their parish with children at the school, too.

GG agreed to enquire about this.

GG to contact Burrowbridge PC

100. COVID 19

DF reports cases of C19 have tripled in the last 10 days in the County. There are pockets of outbreaks emerging and issues with people not isolating and still sending their children to school – the complacency of some members of the public poses a real challenge.

DF continues several school classes have closed due to positive cases, and a care home in Somerton has reported 8 positive cases.

Death rates are still low, but hospital admissions are on the increase. The virus is rapidly spreading across the County.

DF uses the example of a person with 4 children all in different school years, but at the same school. If they had not isolated, it would have meant the whole school being closed. To prevent the virus spreading further people need to isolate if they are requested to do so.

SS asks if the PC can do more to inform residents of the importance of following Government guidelines. SS expresses concern that there is a level of complacency within the village as people think we are in a rural bubble: the truth is it is on our doorstep.

HV adds people are being reminded daily via the news, newspapers, and social media.

GG suggests a banner be displayed on the Royal Oak reminding people the need to follow government advice and not be complacent.

NS offers to make a stronger advice notice on the website regarding Coronavirus and to produce a banner for the RO.

NS to update C19 on the website and devise a banner to display on the RO

101. Remembrance Service

Donation to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

GG proposes a donation of £100 is made to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. HV seconded, 6 in favour, 1 abstained.

Clerk to collect signatures for the cheque and contact the local poppy appeal co-ordinator

Update on the new Memorial Plaque

NS reports he has received the new plaque for the Pavilion and will arrange for the plaque to be mounted within the next week.

SS expresses the sincere gratitude of Neil Sollis and the Playing Fields Management Committee for the work NS has put in to designing the plaque, the casting and mounting.

GG proposes the invoice of the casting of the plaque be made to Croft Castings Ltd at a cost off £305.00 + VAT of £61.00 immediately. NS seconded the motion, and all agreed.

SS reports the PFMC are working with the Baptist Church on the preparations for the remembrance service which is planned to be held at the Playing Field this year. They are seeking guidance on the Coronavirus guidelines and will monitor as the situation as it changes daily.

102. Village Directory/Welcome Pack

GG reports that Ian Upshall has devised a welcome pack for the new residents of the village.

HV suggests as IU has completed all the work individually, it should not be a PC issue but would hope it will point new residents to the village website too.

GG recommends inviting IU to apply for a grant from the PC to cover the printing costs of the publication.

The PC would like to thank Ian Upshall for his efforts on the project.

Clerk to contact IU

103. Phone Box

GG reports the phone box was acquired by the PC for the sum of £1 in 2017. GG continues that originally the Scouts had shown an interest in transforming the phone box, but there is no longer any enthusiasm from their side, and it is now becoming an unsightly mess.

GG suggests the possibility of relocating the phone box to the RO.

SS responds that the phone box should not be relocated; it is a great way of pointing out where the playing fields are. It would be a shame to have everything in the centre of the village and nothing anywhere else.

SS adds there would be a team of people willing to help. It just needs someone who is willing to lead and co-ordinate the project.

PH agrees it should not be relocated and should remain where it is.

GG informs there is still enthusiasm from a member of the community who has suggested it is used for plants.

GG recommends adding the item to the agenda of the next playing fields committee meeting and GG will liaise with the member of the community and also explore the possibility of applying for a grant from the PC to accomplish it.

GG to discuss with the PFMC and the member of the community

104. Willey Road Housing Development

GG reports he has been contacted by the developer of the housing to request written confirmation from the PC that no street lighting is desired on the development.

The PC agrees.

GG continues the developer also requests a formal acceptance document for the handover of the pavilion.

GG states the new pavilion has been built to a high standard and is an asset to the community.

GG to discuss the handover document with the PFMC

GG reports that the old hedge on the development has now been removed and a new one has been planted. GG continues the developer has reported unprecedented interest and quick sales of the new housing.

HV reports the mechanism of the affordable homes means these must be offered to people within the Parish or with strong links to the Parish. There is another 30 days available on these houses before the allocation is widened to a larger area outside of the Parish.

AF requests the PC to visit the development.

GG to request a site visit with the developer for the same date as planning application site visits prior to the next meeting.

105. Footpaths

GG reports the PC footpath officer, Charlotte Alexander, has expressed frustration that her correspondences to the Rights of Way Officer at SCC are not being responded to.

GG informs that he has visited Footpath T25/27 before the maize was harvested, to find it was completely inaccessible due to the crop and overgrowth of the verge. GG recommends stronger worded communications to local landowners and contractors regarding next Spring's maize planting.

GG continues that the landowner has been contacted by the Senior Rights of Way Officer from SCC and has been added to the Ploughing and Cropping Database - meaning a reminder letter will be sent to them in the New Year. Once in receipt of this letter landowners can be pursued for subsequent ploughing and cropping offences which enables a quicker approach to enforcement measures, if required.

PH adds the footpath diversion needs to be implemented which will give a definitive route that should remain clear and accessible.

AF states she has communicated with the landowner with the suggestion of a Section 25 agreement but has received no response.

GG reports the stile in the playing field still has the additional rail which adds extra height, but the lower footing step has been secured. Although several members of the community are unhappy with the height of the stile and access – the landowner has made sure the stile meets the standard requirements.

106. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports she has today received a communication from the Highways Management team at SCC to confirm the Radar Boxes were installed to a telegraph pole in Meare Green on the 5th October. The information gathered will be collected on 14th October and a report will be released shortly after.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

Speedwatch

AF reports that in the last Speedwatch sessions most vehicles were driving at speeds between 30-40MPH. Six vehicles were reported as travelling above 40MPH with one vehicle exceeding 49 MPH.

SS enquires whether there was still interest in the Speedwatch scheme on Curload as she has witnessed excessive speeding on the Curload Hill.

AF responds there was initial interest from a resident but has heard nothing since.

107. Climate/Environmental Issues

Applications to the Somerset Climate Emergency Fund

GG reports the Somerset Climate Emergency Community Fund is now open for applications, although software issues are preventing completed applications from being uploaded at present. SCC hope to have this issue resolved soon.

GG continues the HDTV will be making an application to install solar panels on the Royal Oak as it offers a way for the project to lower its carbon footprint.

SS requests an application for the installation of solar panels on the new pavilion is made at the same time.

If any residents or local groups have a project which they feel could reduce their carbon footprint, they should visit the SCC Climate Emergency Community Fund Webpage for terms of eligibility. Grants range between £5,000 - £75,000. In order to meet the cut-off date for applications they should submit applications to the Parish Clerk or Chairman on or before the 30th October.

Life for Life PC support request

GG reports Life for Life Memorial Forests Charity contacted the PC for support of their application to the Somerset Climate Emergency Fund. The charity has planted memorial forests in various locations throughout the County.

GG requests the correspondence is published on the website to establish if any local landowners would be willing to lend their support in the form of releasing land to the project.

Item to be uploaded to the website

Recycling of Plastic in the village

SS reports a member of the community questions whether more could be done within the village to recycle items currently not accepted by roadside collections.

GG requests SS and the Clerk devise a proposal for the motion, and he defers the item until the next meeting.

NS enquires to the District and County Councillors (SB, DF) how Somerset West and Taunton appear to be far behind other areas with regards the rollout of a more comprehensive roadside recycling service, citing that this is not expected in the local area until 2023 - yet it was rolled out by Mendip CC last week.

DF responds this is partly down to Covid and the additional cost of new bins and new vehicles – but the initiative is still on course to be rolled out.

SS enquires if the Village Hall are still considering the installation of electric car charging points.

GG reports the trustees of the Village hall voted yes to installing two charging points.

108. Playing Field

SS reports there is limited use of the playing field due to Covid, but the football is going well. There is a group of 6 currently hiring the pavilion on a regular basis, whilst restrictions still allow this to happen.

SS continues that there has been interest from a person wishing to take the old pavilion, which is currently barricaded off for health and safety reasons.

DH asks about the gap in the hedge on the playing field towards Willey Road and why this is there.

SS informs this was the site of an old rotten fence that fell during storms last year and will be replaced once the proposed footpath which is planned is completed

109. Heart of the Village

NS reports the electrics are well under way with cabling currently being installed.

HV refers to the request made at the last PC meeting to relocate the defibrillator and the further request from IU to remove the AED at the earliest opportunity along with the plaque and make good the wall on removal.

GG proposes the AED is relocated at the earliest and safest opportunity and the wall on which it is mounted is made good afterwards. HV seconds and all agree.

GG and NS to discuss relocation with the electrician

110. Village Website

NS reports the website is not being maintained as well as it possibly could be due to time constraints.

NS requests if anyone has any updated or current information for the website to email him on nick@curloadfarm.co.uk

111. Broadband

NS thanks DF for his recent assistance with the wireless connection in the village

112. Consultations and Surveys

Consultation on white paper: Planning for the future

An amendment was requested by SS on the affordable housing questions. There were no other amendments to the questionnaire answers circulated by GG

GG to send the survey response to NALC

(DF and SB Leave the meeting)

One Somerset Survey

This was completed and the answers submitted

113. Financial Matters

Standing Order

01-10-20 K de Silva – Clerk Salary	£283.33
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Payments for Authorisation

G Wagen and James – Strim/Mow cemetery 18-08-20	£36.00
J Williams – Sunrise Horticultural Services – Grass cutting	£90.00
PKF Littlejohn – External Audit	£240.00

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

Other Financial items

HV enquires if another signatory is required for the PC accounts. It is confirmed there are four current signatories – HV, NS, AF and JH.

It was agreed no more were required at present.

Bank reconciliation check to the end of September was circulated and checked by SS.

The Clerk has circulated the quarterly to the PC – no issues were raised.

The Conclusion of the External audit of the AGAR has been received and the notice period for any electorate to inspect the audit started on 24th September 2020.

The AGAR and accompanying financial documents and accounts are published on the village website.

The Clerk has requested to attend a SALC course on Effective Budgeting at a cost of £25. This was authorised by all members of the PC.

114. Other Items for Discussion

The Clerk has requested to Sunrise Horticultural Services that October be the final grass cut until the Spring.

The Clerk informs the PC the VAT refund claim for 2019-20 has been submitted to HMRC to the value of £3,663.22.

The Clerk asks if any member of the PC wished to attend a SALC Climate Emergency Online Event on Saturday 24th October. GG agreed to attend.

Clerk to confirm GG attendance with SALC

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.20pm.

The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 9th November 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 30th October 2020.