

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 9th November 2020

held remotely via Zoom.

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

In Attendance – Kelly de Silva and two members of the public

115. Apologies for absence – Heather Venn, Nick Sloan. 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 12th October 2020 were agreed by all to be accurate; and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of interests and dispensations – SS declares an interest in Minute 117 – Boundary behind Church close

Public question time – Two members of the public were present. Ian Upshall is attending with regards to the grant application to the Green Gazette, one was attending to listen to the meeting.

116. Planning

36/20/0015/LB The Laurels. Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory – Internal alterations and installation of 3 No. Velux windows to the rear of the single storey roof
DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 06/10/2020

36/20/0021/AGN Meare Green Farm. Frog Lane, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory – Application for prior notification for the erection of an agricultural building for storage
DECISION – NO OBJECTION 15/10/2020

36/20/0023 Lovells House. Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a detached garage with store/hobby room above
The following response was agreed:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support this planning application”

36/20/0022/NMA The Royal Oak. Huntham Lane, Stoke St Gregory – Non material amendment to application 36/20/0005 to relocate the proposed shop to the west side of the building rather than the right with reinstatement of doorway for access to with reinstatement of doorway for access
Although this application was only uploaded onto the planning portal at SWT on 29-10-2020 a decision of conditional approval was granted on 05-11-20

GG reports an unexpected receipt of a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) payment to the PC pertaining to planning application 36/18/0051/CQ Barn on Windmill. This payment was not expected as no CIL calculation was attached to the application on the planning portal, and no previous communication has been received regarding this.

GG continues there is a CIL calculation attached to planning application 36/20/0023 Lovells House and queries why the PC are suddenly now receiving these payments given no payments have been received in the past on previous applications which could possibly have been subject to CIL. GG asks if there has been a change in policy at SWT with regards to CIL.

AF questions that if a CIL calculation has been applied to this particular application, then why has it not been applied to two previous sizeable builds in Meare Green.

SB and PS respond that the PC should be receiving 15% of any CIL money collected from planning applications, and that neither are aware of any change in policy.

SB suggests the Clerk compile a list of historic planning applications which may have qualified for CIL and she will raise the query this with SWT planning department.
Clerk to compile a list of historic applications and submit to SB for further investigation.

GG enquires to PS if there has been any update on the issues arising from the recent report published on the run-off of phosphates.

PS responds that it is an excessively big and complicated issue.

SB reports a considerable amount of work at Ham treatment works recently, with permission applied for phosphate extraction and erection of new sheds for making the cake by-product. GG asks if the phosphate report could still delay planning application decisions at SWT, SB responds possibly.

GG requests the consultation on White Paper: planning for the future (16th October 2020) is well worth the read by the Parish Councillors.

GG requests item 10 – Boundary behind Church Close – is brought forward in the meeting as it is a planning issue

117. Willey Road Housing Development Boundary behind Church Close

GG reports the PC was contacted by a resident of Church Close regarding the planning permission for the buffer zone between the houses on Church Close and the Willey Road development.

GG refers to a correspondence received from the Principal Planner at WYG Environment planning transport Ltd. on behalf of their clients - West of England Developments (Taunton) No2 Ltd. which stated:

condition 19(i) was originally discharged in January 2020.

As a result of discussions with residents and the PC amended information was submitted to SWT in July 2020 to discharge condition 19(i) including planting plan SPP/3065/01/RevF. It was considered by WYG that a separate full planning application was not required because no change of use is proposed, and the associated fencing and planting works fall under permitted development rights.

Despite the developers chasing a formal response from SWT, no response has been received in relation to the information submitted for condition 19(i)

WYG on behalf of the developers applied for the condition to be “deemed discharged” by serving notice on SWT on 26th October 2020 – which effectively puts SWT on notice to issue a formal decision in relation to the discharge of the condition, along with other planning conditions that remain outstanding due to a lack of response.

If a response was not received from SWT by the end of 9th November 2020, these conditions listed within the deemed discharge notice are automatically formally discharged and no further action from the developer is required to carry on with the development.

No formal communication was received from SWT by the developer since the notice was served.

It is deemed condition 19(i) is therefore automatically discharged and the works shown on the submitted planting plan SPP/3065/01/RevF are now authorised.

GG states, it is assumed under legislation, the buffer zone will go ahead as planned with the residents.

PH enquires if in light of recent delayed planning decisions at SWT, could the notice also have been delayed.

SB asks if the correspondences to SWT have been sent by email or post, as the offices at SWT are closed due to C19 and there have been inexplicable issues with post not being received by recipients.

GG responds the developer reports sending continuous communications to SWT, but they have received no response.

118. Grant application for a financial contribution to the “Green Gazette”

GG reports that Ian Upshall (IU) has independently produced an outstanding document including an extensive insight to amenities and information about Stoke St Gregory for the use of existing and new residents of the village.

IU informs the total cost of printing 100 copies of the Stoke St Gregory Green Gazette has been £120. He has received £15 from a full-page advertisement in the document so he has made a net outlay of £105.

IU continues he tentatively plans to reserve half (50) the copies for newcomers to the village, including those on the Willey Road development, with the other half on sale for current residents at £1 per copy; they are currently available in the village shop or directly from IU.

IU states the grant application submitted to the PC did not request a specific contribution, instead suggesting the PC may consider financial assistance to offset personal costs based on the publication’s community-focused merits.

DH thanks IU for the compiling of the publication stating it is a high quality, knowledgeable, and useful piece of work.

The Clerk suggests that a grant for the initial outlay of £105 could be made, with any profit from future sales being donated to the villages Reeve’s Feast charity.

PH enquires whether IU was anticipating making a profit from the publication.

IU responded that it has not been a profit-making exercise, it has been for the purpose of integrating new people to the village and promoting local amenities and services.

PH asks if the publication will appear on the website.

GG responds it will be kept separate, it is complimentary to the website rather than a replacement or substitute to the website.

GG proposes the PC sponsor the cost of the publication up to the amount of £120 with any proceeds made being donated to the Reeves Feast. DH seconds the motion and all were in favour.

IU requests that all feedback on the publication would be most welcomed and if any person has any useful information on the publication to contact him directly by emailing:

Ian.upshall@gmail.com

119. School Improvements

GG states that a lengthy technical report together with a correspondence sent to the chair of governors at the school from the SCC director of children’s services has been circulated to the PC.

Nothing has come of why central CIL funds could not be accessed for improvements to the school, and there appears to be no momentum to pursue this matter at present.

GG continues the current headmistress LM, has acknowledged a considerable amount of work has been fulfilled at the school and the number of pupils are considerably lower than anticipated with a large Year 6 leaving and a low intake of new pupils, leaving current pupil figures in the sixties.

GG recommends the item is now taken off the agenda until such a time that the newly appointed Headmistress or the Board of Governors require support from the PC.

DH states that the school is a difficult issue as it is funded by SCC - not the district councils - and the PC has no executive power on school issues.

GG reports that in a recent communication circulated by the Clerk after corresponding with SALC, the PC are prohibited under Section 8 of the Local Government Act 1894 to offer financial support to the school, as it is a Church school.

GG informs that the Stoke St Gregory Primary School has successfully attained a place in the Phase 1 roll out of a 20-mph advisory speed limit zone outside the school. The planned

delivery date for the implementation of the programme is anticipated between November 2020 and January 2021.

GG expresses his gratitude to David Fothergill on the matter.

120. Unitarian Authority Proposal

GG asks the PC if any member wishes to share their views on the current status of the proposal. There were no comments.

GG states little remains to say on the subject at present. Local Councils will undoubtedly be the recipients of things to come, which could lead to a greater need for local Councils to be more pro-active in working together.

GG recommends waiting to see what comes to pass once the proposals have been considered by the Secretary of State.

121. Phone Box

GG reports he has spoken with the member of the community who had expressed interest in restoring the phone box situated by the playing fields.

The parishioner expressed enthusiasm for their involvement with the transformation and will be taking on the project in the Spring.

Item to be removed from the agenda until March

122. Climate / Environmental Issues

GG reports he attended a virtual Climate Emergency Conference held by SALC on 24th October as a representative of the PC. GG continues that it was an eye-opening event – the amount of work being done, and the number of people involved is staggering.

GG expresses that the PC are not taking full advantage of the opportunities that are available.

GG suggests it is an initiative that would be better served through collaboration with other local councils and the Somerset Community Action Network (SCAN).

GG feels that with the PC's limited human resources and volume of other business, it is a large undertaking for the PC - GG acknowledges the amount of voluntary work Parish Councillors already do.

With limited success in engaging Climate Change Athelney, GG suggests re-initiating the Forward Strategy Group (FSG) as an advisory group to the PC on Climate Emergency issues and actions.

PH expresses that the PC should take interest in the Rural Energy Initiative. GG responds he has opened dialogue with the development worker for the programme, and the initial deadline of 12th November has been extended to January 2021.

JP reports she has been researching the efforts made by other communities to minimise their impact on the environment. JP informs she was impressed with the achievements of Ashton Hayes, which is a similar sized village to our own, citing the success of their “going carbon neutral” programme and solar panel energy production.

JP suggests there are many small things that can be done – such as planting woodland.

SS agrees that re-initiating the FSG would be a good idea, as the PC alone would not have sufficient time and resources to apply the focus required.

GG informs there were 55 participants on the Climate Emergency Conference, and it would be beneficial to tap into this network. GG continues that if SSG PC collaborated with other local Parish Councils such as North Curry, Curry Rivel and Lyng; there would be a bigger net to cast with representation from a group of communities.

GG asks if any members of the PC would be willing to participate in an FSG for climate issues. SS and JP are willing to participate. PH states he would be very interested but does not have the time to allocate.

GG agrees to devise a communication on the topic calling for contributors to the group from the community. Clerk to compile a contact list of Clerks in local parishes.

SB recommends publicising the Green Homes Grant Scheme on the website. The scheme is open to Homeowners, owner occupiers and landlords who can apply for a voucher of up to

£5000, with low income households eligible to receive 100% of government funding up to a maximum of £10,000, the details are on the SWT website.

GG reports the Somerset Climate Emergency Fund Application will be made this week, (in the first round of submissions) for solar panels on the Royal Oak, with the Willows and Wetlands expressing an interest in electric car charging points at the centre.
(DF joins the meeting)

SS states the Pavilion should be included in the solar panel installation with a view to assisting with the cost and impact of the air source heating that is installed.

AF enquires if storage batteries have been included on the submission for the solar panels, GG responds this could be included on the next round of grants which will be available in January 2021.

DF reports that the roll out from SWT to collect more recyclable items on roadside collections is anticipated to begin by September/October 2021, not 2023 as previously reported.

GG suggests that in light of this information the urgency for the PC to provide a recycling collection point in the village for plastic types not currently accepted by roadside collections is now far less pressing. GG continues that the item of recycling more plastic should be passed to the anticipated advisory group for them to address.

123. Covid 19

DF reports the Coronavirus situation has developed considerably since the last meeting, with a steady rise in Somerset cases to 95.1 cases in 100,000. Sedgemoor has the highest increase with 131 in 100,000 cases reported, and North Somerset reporting 450 cases per 100,000. DF continues that hospital admissions are on the increase with 20 admissions to Musgrove Hospital. The number of deaths due to C19 in the County stands at 209, with an increase in reported figures expected.

DF reports that prior to the national lockdown, it was not considered necessary to impose Tier 2 in the County as the rates remained lower than both England and South West averages.

DF reports increasing transmissions in care homes and a wider cases growth in older age groups.

DF informs that face masks will become mandatory on School transport for those in Year 7 or above.

DF announces that SCC has made £120,000 available for food support for families during school holidays, with an additional £1.54Million from the government which will assist families receiving free school meals over the Christmas and Easter holidays.

GG thanks DF for his detailed report and expresses his concern over the current Covid situation.

DF responds that there was concern about going into a further lockdown, but we now must make it count and follow the guidance to reduce the infection rate.

124. Budget, Precept Planning and Future Projects

GG refers to the proposed budget compiled and circulated by the Clerk on 26th October.

The Clerk has forecasted a probable spend of £17,682.34 against a budget of £19,070 in this financial year of 2020-21.

For the 2021-22 financial year a budgeted spend of £17,453.10 has been forecasted by the Clerk/RFO, with an income of £17,630 estimated for the 2020-21 financial year if the precept remains at its current rate of £16,000.

CIL money received is not included in the main budget as this must be accounted for separately and can only be spent on certain projects with authorisation from SWT.

SS enquires if the additional housing in the village will impact on the finances.

DF responds that it will not mean the PC receives additional money, but the precept household payments should decrease as it is spread over the number of properties in the village, with those in Band D accounting for how the base rate is set.

GG asks if there are any significant increases in specific line items as he notes that the footpath Maintenance line has doubled since 2019-20. The Clerk explains the rise in this line item: the previous contractor's price had remained flat for a considerable amount of time. When the contractor stepped down, the new contractor - although the best value - was more expensive.

GG reports many local councils were increasing their precept to accommodate Climate Emergency initiatives, and he asks if a line should be included in the '21-22 budget for this. The Clerk responded that it is advisable to retain 12 months of financial reserves - especially in the current circumstances. Taking this into consideration, the PC might wish to consider earmarking a portion of the current reserves for such projects.

GG asks the PC members if anyone has any issues to raise with the budget and the proposal that the precept level remains at £16,000. No issues were raised.

GG proposes the PC accept the budget presented by the Clerk/RFO for the 2021-22 financial year. SS seconded the motion, and all were in favour.

GG proposes the Precept figure remains at £16,000 for the 2021-22 financial year, JH seconded the motion, and all were in favour.

125. Footpaths

Nothing to report

126. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports she has held telephone conversations with Kate Brown (KB) - the Traffic Engineer at SWT.

A Radar Box was installed in Meare Green from 5th - 14th October 2020 which recorded an average speed of 32.9 MPH. This takes into consideration all vehicles - from cyclists travelling below 20MPH to those exceeding the speed limit of 40MPH. The Clerk requested the raw data, but it is not possible to obtain this information.

The 32.9MPH average speed does reinforce that it would be realistic to change the current speed limit from 40 MPH-30MPH in Meare Green.

The Clerk continues that the Parish Council would be expected to pay the full cost of the works. This would include moving current road signs, installing repeater signs and possible road markings at an estimated cost of between £6,000 to £8,000 with advance payment of 20%.

The amended speed limit would extend from the village, with the PC being expected to advise where in Meare Green the new 30MPH zone should commence.

The Clerk informs the 30MPH speed limit would require the support of the Police and the Traffic Regulation Order would also need amending and re-advertising, so residents can support or object to the speed limit reduction.

DH states that he is opposed to the speed limit reduction stating the data suggests that people are not speeding excessively, and the cost implications would be a waste of money.

AF responds the current 40MPH speed limit is very unfair on the residents of Meare Green.

AF expresses that walking along the road, you take your life into your own hands and the local residents agree with the proposed speed limit reduction.

AF reports the Speed Watch regularly records vehicles travelling between 40-50 MPH, the lowest recorded average being 34-35MPH.

GG states that this issue has generated more interest and comments from the Community than any other item on the PC agenda has in a long time. There is a majority view from the Parishioners that the speed reduction would be justified, and the PC have the financial resources required.

PH states the reduction in the speed limit in Meare Green will do little to slow down tractors or change the behaviour of cyclists.

GG proposes the PC develop the opportunity to proceed and gather more information on the speed limit reduction in Meare Green. AF seconded the motion, 4 in favour, 1 against.

Traffic Issues at The Willows and Wetlands.

GG reports that over the Half Term break, the Halloween trail at the Willows and Wetlands had caused tailbacks of up to 200 metres. Residents who live near the centre had contacted the PC to raise the issue.

GG states the situation was a transient phenomenon, attracting an unexpected and unprecedented number of visitors.

The proprietors of the centre have confirmed they will not be holding any similar events over Christmas.

SS adds it was a free event that was publicised, and people were coming from far and wide to visit.

GG informs the situation has been noted.

127. Floods

Nothing to report

128. Playing Fields

SS reports that due to the current Coronavirus lockdown the Pavilion is not in use.

The remembrance service that was held at the playing fields, with the new memorial plaque being a focal point was successful and held following the guidance issued.

SS commented that the plaque, flagpole, and wreath laid was genuinely nice.

129. Heart of the Village / Shop in a box

GG reports that the anticipated move from the shop in a box to the Royal Oak is planned for the 23rd November.

130. Village Website

Nothing to report

131. Broadband

Nothing to report

132. Consultations and Surveys

NALC Climate Change Survey Deadline 29-01-21

GG recommends this is deferred and delegated to the proposed climate group and added to the next agenda

NALC Public Consultation & Public Service Consultation

GG informs this survey is centred around a series of questions on the seven principles of public life. GG recommends he completes the survey on behalf of the PC, circulating the responses before submitting

133. Financial Matters

Standing Order

01-11-20 K de Silva – Clerks Salary	£283.33
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Payments for Authorisation

J Williams – Sunrise Horticultural Services – Grass Cutting	£90.00
SALC Clerk Training	£25.00
SALC Annual Subscription	£246.50
SLCC CiLCA Enrolment Fee – K de Silva	£410.00

Payments Received

26-10-20 VAT Claim for 2019-2020	£3663.22
27-10-20 SWT CIL Payment	£17,005.09

CIL Breakdown

36/18/0048 Willey Road Housing Development

£16,097.67

36/18/0051/CQ Barn on Windmill

£907.42

GG proposes that all payments are made, JP seconded the motion, all in favour.

Other Financial Items

Bank reconciliation to the end of October check completed by SS

134. Other Items for discussion

The Clerk requests to not attend the December meeting due to family commitments and suggests asking a previous Clerk to cover in her absence. The PC agreed.

The Clerk has received a cash payment of £27.00 for the additional inscription on an existing headstone in the burial ground. The Clerk requests that considering the current lockdown, the Clerk transfers the money from her personal account and retains the cash, raising an invoice to account for this and circulating the relevant paperwork to maintain transparency.

The PC agreed.

DH reports that there is a substantial pothole at the top of Dark Lane that has probably been caused by a gateway that has not been cleared causing minor flooding on the road.

PH suggests there is little point in reporting the blocked gateway to the landowner until works at Dark Lane Farm have finished as this too may be adding to the issue.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.04pm.

The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 14th December 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 1st December 2020.