

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 11th January 2021.

held remotely via Zoom.

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

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

150. Apologies for absence – David Fothergill

Minutes of the previous meeting – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 14th December had one amendment to Min.138 Para 6. The amendment reads as follows:

AF enquires about the Broomfield Park road sign that has been installed at the entrance to the development.

HV questions the implications of a name change further down the line.

GG responds that the request to name the development Wells Hay is still on the table – the Broomfield Park name is for marketing purposes and should be changed once the site is handed over.

The minutes were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of interests and dispensations – GG declares an interest in Minute 152 – Charging points at the village hall and will abstain from any vote.

Public question time – One member of the public is present with regards to planning application 36/20/0029, one member of the public is present with regards to Min.156 – Exit from the Willow & Wetlands onto the Stoke Road. Four members of the public were present to observe.

151. Planning

No Planning decisions to report

36/20/0029 – The Gables, Curload, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a timber clad chicken house and a polytunnel on land to the South of the house (retention of works already undertaken)

The following response was agreed:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agree not to comment on the application.”

36/20/0028 – 33 Church Close, Stoke St Gregory – Replacement of conservatory with the erection of a single storey extension to the side (AMENDED APPLICATION)

It is agreed that the amendments are minor and does not alter the original response submitted to SWT planning.

GG brings forward item from Min.156 - exit from the Willows and Wetlands onto the Stoke Road to come under planning.

Exit from the Willows and Wetlands onto Stoke Road

GG refers to a correspondence the PC received from a resident of a neighbouring village citing safety concerns with the entrance / exit from the Willows and Wetlands onto the Stoke Road.

HV asks for clarification that the entrance and exit has always been from the one main entrance. HV states that throughout her extensive time in the village, she can only recall the entrance and exit being from the same point, with the exit to the right of the site being a private driveway for the residents.

Nicola Coate (NC) confirms this is the case.

GG questions if the issue is a result of more visitors to the centre and asks if it is deemed that there is a road safety issue within the vicinity of the site.

NC informs the PC that as proprietors of the Willows and Wetlands, they went to great lengths to commission a highways report as part of planning application 36/20/0008. NC highlights that in the last five years there has been two collisions on the Stoke Road, neither of which occurred in the immediate vicinity of the centre.

HV refers to the Halloween event which saw a dramatic increase in visitor numbers to the centre and queries whether this has aggravated local residents as the entrance / exit has been in the same location with a mirror opposite for at least the last 30 years.

NC responds that the Halloween event was unprecedented and solely down to the fact that C19 regulations had been lifted, meaning people were desperate to get out and visit the countryside. NC continues that the event was not publicised and if the Willows & Wetlands had any idea of the volume of visitors it would attract, they would have operated an allocated timeslot booking system.

GG asks whether there is a road safety issue within the vicinity of the centre and is there any mitigation to resolve the issue.

NC responds the biggest mitigation would be to reduce the speed limit to 30 MPH along Meare Green, which she is aware the PC are currently working towards.

PH states the farm no longer uses the main entrance to the visitor centre but notes the entrance barrier has been relocated further up the driveway, away from the entrance. PH asks how this is managed, for instance if a vehicle needed to reverse out of the centre, then this could potentially pose a road safety issue.

NC responds that when the barrier is closed on a Sunday (the only day the site is closed to the public) bollards are situated at the entrance preventing vehicles being able to turn into the site.

It is agreed that the speed limit reduction in the area will be the primary focus of the PC to improve traffic management in the area.

GG to write to the complainant to inform them of the discussion.

152. Charging Points at the Village Hall

GG refers to Min.142 of the December PC meeting which discussed that the village hall had applied for a 50% grant for the installation of electric car charging points. This installation was delayed with the prospect of attaining a full grant via the Climate Emergency Fund, but this fund has been grossly oversubscribed to, so it was suggested at the previous PC meeting the Village Hall committee should be invited to make an application to the PC to assist with funding the project.

GG informs that the SWT grant contribution would be £1500 payable on completion of the work leaving a balance of £1317.77 + VAT of £563.65 totalling £1881.42.

PH enquires about the amount the Village Hall (VH) are wishing to contribute towards the installation.

GG responds that originally the VH intended to pay the remaining balance but decided against this due to the low amount of revenue currently being generated by the VH resulting from C19 restrictions.

SS states that it was her suggestion at the December meeting to invite the VH to apply for a grant from the PC. SS continues that this is an opportunity for the PC to incentivise adoption of green energy within the community. The PC currently have the finance and the capacity to support this.

SS asks if the VH benefit financially from the installation and use of the electric car charging points. GG responds yes.

NS states he is comfortable to support the application but the VH should also contribute financially towards the installation - especially as they will receive revenue from their use.

HV suggests the PC should support the application but the revenue accrued from the usage should be paid into a charity pot such as the Reeves Feast.

PH enquires about the future charge point servicing and maintenance costs and asks who will be responsible for paying this.

SS suggests the income from the points could be allocated to the servicing and maintenance, but this should be discussed with the provider.

PH proposes that the PC grant the village hall 50% of the remaining total with the VH contributing the other 50% of the cost (less the SWT grant of £1500). The total PC grant contribution would amount to £940.71. HV seconded the motion, GG abstained from voting, with 5 in favour.

GG to inform the VH of the decision.

153. Casual Vacancy – Co-option of a new Councillor

With great sadness GG informs the PC that Councillor Nick Sloan will be stepping down from his role on the Parish Council. His resignation will come into effect at the end of this evening's meeting.

GG expresses the sincerest gratitude of the PC to NS.

GG continues that for almost ten years Nick Sloan has served on the PC with distinction, four years were spent as Chairman; a role to which he brought dedication, energy and not least fairness and balance in reconciling sometimes fractious discussions with diplomacy and tact. It has been a period of profound change in the Village, coming to the end of which few would disagree with the proposition that Stoke St Gregory is a better place, in no small part due to Nick's stewardship of the PC. As chairman, Nick set the bar so high that few will ever be able to come close.

All members of the PC agree with GG's statement and thank Nick for all his time, effort, and input whilst on the PC.

GG states that the Clerk will now inform the Electoral Officer of the resignation of NS and declare a casual vacancy. The Clerk will post a statutory notice in the noticeboard, shop and website informing the electors of the vacancy.

Legislation stipulates that 14 working days must elapse from the date of the notice, at the end of which an election will be held if ten or more electors have given written notice to the Electoral Officer at SWT that they require an election to be organised.

At the end of the 14 working day period, the Electoral Officer will inform the Clerk whether an election has been called by ten or more electors, or the vacancy must be filled by co-option.

The end of the statutory notice period will be February 3rd, 2021. After this time recruitment publicity can commence to attract applicants for co-option with the aim for co-option to take place at the March PC meeting.

KdS to notify the Electoral Officer and display notice. KdS to prepare posters for co-option. KdS and GG to publicise the vacancy on all platforms after the statutory notice period has ended.

154. Covid 19

GG informs that in the absence of DF this evening, there will be no in depth Covid report. GG continues that the current situation is self-apparent and reaching a critical point. GG stresses the importance of the community adhering to the lockdown rules and government guidelines and urges everyone to follow them.

NS informs that all up-to-date commentary supplied from SCC is available on the village website; <https://www.stokestgregory.org/services/medical-2/coronavirus-information/>

155. Willey Road Housing Development

Visibility splay / Pinch point onto the Willey Road

GG asks if this is an issue the PC wish to pursue.

PH states the splay is designed to comply with regulations despite the wall entering the development appearing to be large and intrusive and the hedge on the Willey Road will require constant trimming to ensure good visibility.

PH continues that the cars parked on the opposite side to the development could pose an issue, as there is a legal requirement to keep a distance from the junction.

SS enquires who will be responsible for maintaining the trimmed hedge.

HV requests that the developer is contacted to clarify ownership and maintenance of the trimming on the hedge's roadside edge.

HV states the hedge at the bottom of Willey Road towards the Slough lane junction by the horse field is becoming overgrown and is impacting visibility around the corner.

HV continues she still feels strongly about the visibility splay from the development.

SS states that highways were heavily involved with the implementation.

GG to contact the developer to ascertain the ownership and maintenance obligations of the hedge and discuss the design versus plan of the entrance to the development.

Traffic Measures – ensuring child safety crossing from the development to the Playing Field.

GG reports he has made enquiries about the relocation of the school/children sign. Due to the cabling that will be required there will be cost implications and could result in a delay with the implementation of the 20 MPH zone that will be active during school hours. GG suggests relocation of the sign may be an item to consider in the future.

HV enquires if there is any contingency for a footpath.

SS responds that the playing field embankment appears to be on the route of the planned footpath.

AF asks if there are any plans to improve the pedestrian entrance to the playing fields via the embankment.

SS responds that she is not sure; the gate could either be closed off completely or steps installed to make the entrance more accessible once the footpath has been installed – it will be resolved in time.

HV states her amazement at the lack of information provided. PH responds the details are all in the plans, it is just not on the ground yet.

GG to circulate the plans to members of the PC.

Name of the Willey Road Housing Development

GG reports he has contacted the developer with regards to the naming of the development but has received little in the way of a response.

GG continues he has contacted District Cllr. Phil Stone seeking to understand SWT's policy on road renaming and the potential implications this may have.

GG states there is still the intent and desire to call the development 'Wells Hay', but a name change carries a huge cost and has implications for the new residents of the development, as all their deeds and utility bills will carry 'Broomfield Park'.

AF informs there has been some discussion about this on the Nextdoor platform.

SS asks how we have reached this point when the request to name the development 'Wells Hay' was made quite some time ago.

HV states the PC's request to name the development 'Wells Hay' has been ignored by the developer and now residents of the development will be very reluctant to support a name change.

SS responds when compared with other developers the 'Broomfield Park' developer has been accommodating to most requests the PC has submitted.

GG states that there are pros and cons on both sides of the matter.

156. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports that she sent an email to the Traffic Management Officer (TMO) before the Christmas break in which she informed the TMO of the PC's wish to proceed and clarified the Parish Boundary is at the top of Denmans Hill.

The Clerk has not received a response from the TMO and states this is quite unusual as they have been extremely responsive up to this point, she acknowledged there may be delays due to the pandemic. The Clerk agrees to acquire a further update for the next PC meeting.

Speed Watch

AF informs there was one Speed watch session held prior to the lockdown. All speed watch sessions have been postponed until restrictions have been lifted.

School drop-off / Pick up.

GG reports that due to the Christmas break, subsequent lockdown, and closure of the school to many pupils there has been no further issues. GG advises the item should be included on future agendas once the lockdown has been lifted.

157. Footpaths

GG reports that Footpath T25/27 at the rear of Slough Court has now been fully signposted.

158. Climate / Environmental Issues

Rural Energy Initiative

GG reports that the only neighbouring parish who had shown interest in applying for the initiative was Othery. GG suggests it may be something that the PC return to in the future.

Climate Forward Strategy Group (FSG)

GG reports he will be attending a meeting held by Exeter University on Carbon Footprint. This will go towards building an agenda for a FSG moving forward.

AF informs Curry Rivel PC have brought a 6-acre site and had planted trees.

GG questions if this would be the right approach for SSG citing it would be best to deliver the greatest impact and make a tangible difference rather than something that looks good.

GG states that most Parishes have a climate champion, which SSG does not yet.

If you care about our unique natural environment and would be prepared to contribute to maintaining it, then the PC would like to hear from you. You can register your interest by e-mailing the Parish Clerk on ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk

159. Floods

PH reports that Currymoor had recently flooded but there was not much flooding to report on the roads.

PH questions why the flood gates at Lyng heading towards Haymoor and Cutts Road are not being locked.

HV states this should be reported to Highways before a driver is stranded.

GG to report to Highways.

160. Playing Field

SS reports there has been recent issues with teenagers late at night drinking in the pavilion even though it is unsafe and awaiting collection. It is fenced off for public safety, but this is not acting as a deterrent. SS continues there has also been issues with teenagers dinking in the Church porch.

SS informs that it is extremely unlikely the revised date of the Stoke Stampede in March will be able to go ahead due to the current pandemic situation.

HV requests the PC are kept apprised with the financial difficulties this may present for the Playing Fields committee with the Stampede being the main source of revenue for them.

161. Heart of the Village

NS reports the second phase of the project is well under way with building work planned to commence in the next week in the pub. NS continues that the shop is performing well. A full update on the HOTV is available on the village website;

<https://www.stokestgregory.org/businesses/hotv-2/hotv-news/>

162. Village Website

NS agrees he will still maintain the village website despite his resignation from the PC.

163. Broadband

GG reports there will be a requirement to find someone to assist NS with researching the options and developing a strategy for improving broadband in the Village.

164. Consultations and Surveys

No consultations have been received since the last meeting.

165. Financial Matters

Standing Order

01-01-21 K de Silva – Clerks Salary £283.33

Payments for Authorisation

Clerks Expenses – Printer ink £10.99

Rockwell Print & Sign – Printing of Winter Newsletter £63.00

Payments Received

None

GG proposes all payments are made, NS seconded, all in favour.

Other Financial Items

Bank reconciliation to the end of December was completed by JP.

Refund for the SIAB not being returned to base.

GG reports the container housing the Shop in a box is now redundant and has been purchased by another village for similar purpose resulting in a refund from the supplier of the container of £450.

GG continues that a grant issued to the project in November 2019 enabled the PC to fund the hire of the container and purchase of the shop fittings, so technically the refund and items are the property of the PC.

HV proposes the refund and sale of the fittings are gifted to the HOTV project, SS seconded the motion, NS abstained, five were in favour.

NS thanked the PC stating the HOTV had large outgoings and appreciate the PC's support.

Duplicate Payment

The Clerk reports there has been an issue with Lloyds on-line banking and a payment was duplicated in December. This duplication of payment has been refunded back to the PC.

166. Other Items for Discussion

GG requests Disposition of CIL money is added to the next agenda. GG informs there must be a clear and transparent list of any infrastructure spend. This may include the £8000 for the speed limit reduction in Meare Green.

SS and HV request that local key organisations are invited to join the discussion.

NS advises the grant policy should be revised ahead of further discussions.

**GG to contact local groups regarding CIL infrastructure spend and publicise in the PC report.
Clerk to add items to the next agenda.**

Burial request for S. Thomas

The Clerk reports she has been contacted by a former parishioner with regards to the interment of cremated remains.

HV recommends the request is forwarded to the PCC as there is still available space in the church for cremated remains.

KdS to forward the request to the PCC.

SWT Precept form

The Clerk reports a SWT finance specialist contacted her to highlight a decision taken by SWT's Section 151 Officer to use information as of 30th November 2020. The implications of this decision mean the level of precept the PC had previously set based on the original tax base communicated has been changed.

The original precept divided by original tax base (369.34) = £43.32 per Band D property.

The revised precept divided by final tax base (371.05) = £43.12 per Band D property resulting in a percentage decrease in Band D charge of 0.46%

Given the recalculation the Clerk asks the PC if they wish to amend the original precept request of £16,000.

The PC agree unanimously that the precept remains the same amount of £16,000.

KdS to confirm with the SWT finance specialist.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.19pm.

The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 8th February 2021 at 7.30pm.

Please email any items for the agenda to the Clerk (ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk) and the chairman (grahiamgleed@gmail.com) by 31st January 2021.