

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8th February 2021.

held remotely via Zoom.

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

In Attendance – Kelly de Silva, Charlotte Sundquist (Footpaths Officer) and four members of the public

167. Apologies for absence – David Fothergill will arrive at 8.15pm due to attending another PC meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 11th January were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of interests and dispensations – GG declares an interest in HOTV. GG is granted a 12-month dispensation to participate in discussions and votes concerning the HOTV (Min 135 14/12/2020)

Public question time – Jill Loader (Census Engagement Manager) is present to discuss the upcoming census. One member of the public was attending in regard to Min175, two members of the public were attending to observe. No comments were made.

168. Planning

36/20/0026 – 9 Woodhill Terrace, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a conservatory to the rear.

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL (11-01-21)

36/20/0018 Matchams Farm. Curload, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a general-purpose agricultural storage lean to building.

The timeline of the application was questioned as the original application was submitted in September 2020.

The following response was agreed:

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

36/21/0001/CLA Application for prior approval under Part 1 Class A for bridge works at the River Tone Railway Bridge, Stanmoor Road, Athelney.

The following response was agreed:

“The Railway Bridge by the Athelney Crossing is the only structure blocking the flow of the River Tone from New Bridge to the confluence with the Parrett. No change is proposed to the current height of the soffit, which presents a solid blockage to between 100 and 400mm of water when the river is in flood (Hook Bridge spillway running), which is not uncommon.

The sensitivity of the Tone drainage system to the ongoing and increasing effect of Climate Change is bound to increase through the life of the new bridge, and we feel very strongly that this opportunity should be taken to modify the design so as to raise the soffit above the flood level of the Tone. To do less, is an abdication of the responsibility to provide infrastructure which is fit for purpose across the entire anticipated lifespan of the structure. To commission an engineering study in support of this design, which concludes that nothing will change seems, under the circumstances, like a perverse and inappropriate deployment of resources. We appreciate that this is a permitted development, but we feel that the interference with the flow of the Tone, now and increasingly throughout the life of the new bridge, are clear grounds for objection.”

GG suggests that with future planning application responses, the PC should consider a more proactive approach to comments concerning potential environmental impact, such as heating and green spaces, where relevant.

(One member of the public joins the meeting. GG asks if they wish to comment before the meeting continues. The member of the public refers to a communication with the Chair regarding the definitive drawings of the Willey Road development being published on the SWT planning portal. GG reports the response from the developer was 'the publication will not be possible until Wessex Water approves the access to the pumping station.' The member of the public comments that there is an expectation that this would have been agreed before this stage.

GG informs he has recently received some drawings from the developer and to his knowledge the only issue yet to be resolved is the exact location of the footpath between Church Close and the development. GG agrees to continue pursuing the developer about the publication of the drawings on the SWT portal.)

SS requests that in the interest of security and ease of maintenance a brick wall along the boundary of the house next to the footpath may be more suitable than a fence.

Clerk to add this item to the next agenda.

169. Census 2021 – Jill Loader, Census Engagement Manager for Somerset March 21st, 2021

Jill Loader (JL) introduces herself as the ONS Census Engagement Manager for Somerset. JL informs completion of the Census is compulsory and that it is used to build a detailed snapshot that aids investment planning, service delivery and highlights long term trends. JL continues there is a special focus on those who face barriers completing the Census – including the elderly and people with physical or mental issues that mean they may require more assistance with completing the Census forms. There is a risk that the needs of these types of vulnerable groups are not met if the Census is not completed by all.

JL states that the Census this year will be predominantly digital, but paper forms will be available for those who do not have internet access or who are not digitally savvy.

JL continues that the planned timeline of the Census is from the 22nd – 28th February there will be an advertising campaign informing people of the upcoming Census. Subsequently between 1st – 12th March 2021 each household will receive a unique code which will allow them to complete the online form. Additional households that have been assessed will receive paper forms.

JL informs that this 2021 Census will consist of new voluntary questions as well as questions for veterans.

JL states that personal information is required purely to avoid households being double counted, and this information will not be used by or shared with any third parties.

JL continues that the benefit of a digital Census is that it will allow for faster outputs and she requests the PC raise awareness of the Census within the Parish.

HV questions how the aforementioned 'additional households' have been assessed to receive paper forms.

JL responds this is based upon data from the 2011 Census – it considers a broad range of demographics – and it identifies areas, not just households, which should receive paper forms.

HV asks if there is a facility available for the elderly and vulnerable to obtain a paper form, as it is important that this is easily accessible for these groups.

JL answers that there is a national telephone helpline due to go live on the 1st of March 2021. There have also been discussions with the Village Agents in order to provide assistance for those who may require it.

JL continues that after the 21st of March Census deadline, field teams will be available to offer advice and support as required.

DH asks about those people who do not wish to participate in the Census.

JL responds that there is a legal requirement to complete the Census. Once the field teams have identified households that have not yet completed the Census, they will visit the households to offer assistance in completing the form. Beginning the end of April, a total of five reminders will be sent to the household, and around the end of May a letter of non-compliance will be sent. The worst-case scenario would be legal proceedings commencing thereafter.

If you require any information or assistance with the completion of the Census on March 21st, 2021 please visit the government website; [census.gov.uk](https://www.census.gov.uk)

A national helpline will be available from 1st March 2021.

If you require any further assistance contact the Parish Clerk – Kelly de Silva – ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk or 07701 053 903.

170. Casual Vacancy / Co-option for a new Parish Councillor

The Clerk reports on 8th February 2021 she received confirmation from the Electoral Officer that no by-election has been called. This means the PC can now commence with the co-option process to fill the current vacancy for a Parish Councillor.

The Clerk informs that Nick Sloan has kindly offered to design a poster for the vacancy. This week the poster and details of the vacancy will be published on social media platforms and advertised within the village. Once adverts are live a period of at least 14 working days must pass before the Parish Council may consider all applications and the co-option taking place.

The Clerk continues that to-date, interest has been expressed by two parishioners and the Clerk will send the application forms and SALC Good Councillor guide to the interested parties.

GG informs that Spring village newsletter will go into circulation close to the end of the application window, and he requests all members of the PC invite possible candidates. GG expresses his thanks to a member of the public in attendance for expressing their interest in the vacancy.

SS questions how the voting process will take place in light of meetings being held by virtual means.

The Clerk responds that she will clarify the process with SALC prior to the co-option.

Clerk to email SALC for advice on lawful voting by virtual means.

If you care about the village and have a little time to spare, please consider joining us. Being on the Parish Council can be a fascinating and rewarding experience. For information on eligibility for the role of a Parish Councillor and an application form contact the Clerk: Kelly de Silva ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk 07707 053903 or the Chair: Graham Gleed grahiamgleed@gmail.com 01823 490407.

171. Communication to local landowners and farmers prior to maize and crop planting

GG recommends a letter is drafted and agreed at the March meeting.

CS requests the letter is also sent to the contractors that carry out the planting.

GG to draft a letter, Clerk to add the item to the March agenda.

172. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

GG reports the PC sent a communication to community organisations within the village to raise awareness on the subject and invited them to join discussions on the allocation of the PC's portion of CIL money.

GG informs that so far, the PC has received one submission for a grant, this was from the HOTV. GG expresses his surprise at the lack of initial responses.

HV queries if the Willowset have submitted an application to the PC. GG responds that no recent application has been received as yet.

GG refers to the current PC grant policy and application form. GG states this is heavily based on applications submitted under Section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and suggests the PC should draft an application form and policy more specific to CIL allocation application requests.

GG states it would be inappropriate to discuss or consider the HOTV application until a CIL-specific policy and application form has been agreed.

(DF Joins the meeting)

SS enquires if there is a deadline for submissions to apply for CIL money.

GG responds it would be beneficial to consider an even distribution and allocate money at a later date for future projects - however the money must be spent within five years of the PC taking receipt of the money from SWT.

SS asks if there should be a limit on how much can be applied for.

GG responds that there should be no cap however the PC should consider allocating up to 50% of the money during the first tranche.

PH states the policy should include that the allocation of the money is discretionary and there should be no retrospective applications.

GG to draft a CIL policy and application form for review at the next meeting.

173. Request from Stogursey Parish Council for lobbying on S106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

GG reports a communication from Stogursey PC has been received. They wish to garner support for a change in the policy which was applied by SWT in West Somerset with regards to S106 settlements being made instead of CIL payments. CIL has less restrictive rules on spending, with greater benefit for the community. GG asks if the PC wish to respond or whether it is out of the PC's geographical reach.

It is agreed no response will be submitted.

PH asks why West Somerset must receive S106 instead of CIL.

SB responds that she does not know why West Somerset adopted S106 over CIL. S106 has tighter constraints on allocation and PCs are having to return the money to the developers.

GG questions SB on how the PC gain approval from SWT for the CIL spending within the Parish. SB responds she will contact the CIL specialist at SWT to enquire if there is a specific form or route for this.

SB to contact Rebecca Staddon to confirm how SWT approval on CIL spend is sought.

174. Covid 19

DF reports that since his last (December) report to the PC, numbers are now moving in the right direction with 105 per 100,000 cases in Somerset West and Taunton.

The vaccination programme is now operational throughout the county with 13 doctors' surgeries, 3 pharmacists and 2 mass vaccination centres at Somerset and Bath showground and Taunton racecourse. As of a week ago 112,000 people in Somerset had received the vaccine, but it is expected this number will have risen dramatically over the last week.

DF continues that a majority of the over 70's and care-homes have now received the vaccine.

DF stresses the importance of people not becoming complacent. The virus is still out there, vaccinations are not 100% effective, and the virus can still spread. It is vitally important that people still observe the government guidelines.

SS refers to the government announcement earlier today that anyone over 70 who has not received the vaccine can now book online or call 119.

If you are over 70 and have not received the Coronavirus vaccine visit the NHS website at www.england.nhs.uk to book an appointment or call 119 free of charge between the hours of 7am – 11pm seven days a week.

SS informs that she has been volunteering at the Taunton Racecourse vaccination centre. They are doing an amazing job with the public showing great gratitude towards the service and volunteers.

HV states she is aware of several housebound people within the village who have also now received their vaccine.

DF adds over 700 SCC employees have been deployed to assist the NHS with the vaccination programme – it has been a team effort.

175. Willey Road Housing Development

Hedge and Hedge Trimming on the Willey Road

GG reports that since the last meeting a volunteer has trimmed the hedge along the Willey Road. GG extends the PC's gratitude to the volunteer.

GG informs he has contacted the developer to ascertain who is responsible for the maintenance of the hedge on the Willey Road. GG reports the developer has initially said it would be the responsibility of the homeowners, but GG queries this as resident's access to the hedge is obstructed by the fence which separates the gardens from the hedge.

JH enquires if a management group of the properties would be responsible for the hedge and green spaces within the development.

DF informs that any orphaned pieces of land would still be the developers responsibility.

GG reports that the preliminary notice for the transfer of title of the allotments to the PC has been initiated by the developer of the Willey Road housing development.

SS asks if this will include the allotment car parking area. GG responds yes.

Visibility splay/Pinch Point onto the Willey Road

HV refers to an email circulated on 17-01-21 which appeared to show plans of planting around the corner of the entrance rather than a wall.

PH responds the plan appears to depict a wall with planting in front of it. PH states that extra planting in front of the wall could exasperate the visibility issue further.

HV questions if the wall is positioned in the correct place as the drawings depict.

PH answers that there would be a need to measure this on the ground.

SS states that to move the wall or lessen the path the biggest impact of this would be on the purchaser of the house – who has brought it in good faith.

HV requests the developer is contacted regarding the consistent concerns surrounding the visibility splay prior to contacting the SWT planning department to request a review into submitted plans and the site entrance.

GG to contact the developer to convey the concerns raised.

176. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports that on 26-01-21 an email was circulated to the PC from the SCC Traffic Management Officer proposing the start of the 30MPH commences from the current Stoke St Gregory nameplate.

The Clerk continues previous suggestions of the starting point being at Goulds farm would not be possible without consultation with North Curry Parish Council due to the narrow part of the road being outside the SSG village boundary.

The Clerk states before the Traffic Management Officer is able to draft the TRO and submit a quote that would be more precise than the £6000 - £8000 approximation circulated 04-11-2021, the PC would need to agree a start point by resolution.

DH states he is personally opposed to the speed limit reduction in Meare Green and asks if it is something the PC wish to pursue.

JH states that the PC has voted in principle to the project, but the start of the implementation of the 30MPH needs to be agreed.

AF enquires if the village name plate can be relocated to the village boundary and the 30MPH speed limit commence from that point.

JH responds that due to the narrowing of the road at the boundary, the nameplate would not be able to be installed there.

PH states that the name plate's current position is correct. If it were to be relocated to the narrow part of the road it would be distracting roadside furniture at a point where people should be concentrating more on the dangerous part of the road and navigating through safely.

AF proposes the start of the 30MPH speed limit should start from the current Stoke St Gregory Village name plate and should commence through to the next 30MPH sign heading

towards the village. This was seconded by PH with one Parish Councillor opposed, no abstentions and five Parish Councillors in favour.

Clerk to inform the Traffic Management Officer of the confirmed start of the 30MPH through Meare Green.

Speed Watch

AF reports that due to the current lockdown, no speed watch has been able to take place.

177. Footpaths

CS reports that the current lockdown has led to public pathways in the village being used heavily – which is a good thing, however they are very muddy due to the footpaths being ploughed throughout the year. If a 1.5m clear space were left when the fields were ploughed, this would make a significant difference to their current condition.

CS would like to thank the volunteers and walkers who are trimming overgrowth on the pathways.

SS reports that the previous Footpath Officer has a gate that should be installed where the current stile is from Church Close to the allotments making access easier and safer.

Clerk to add the item of replacement gate for the stile at Church Close to the next agenda.

178. Climate/Environmental Issues

GG reports the SSG Forward Strategy Group (FSG) has held the first meeting. GG continues that there has been a good contribution from local residents for the FSG, with quite a powerful team being established to identify projects which can contribute to the future welfare of the village.

(GG shares a screen view of a Carbon Footprint tool)

GG explains that the Parish Carbon Footprint Calculator developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Exeter University shows that SSG is responsible on a consumption basis for the emission of 9219 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide per annum. This equates to an average of 21.6 tonnes per household within the Parish.

GG reports he has spoken to the school Headmistress and Chair of the Governing Board for the School with regards to raising awareness of the village carbon emissions. They have expressed an interest to incorporate this into the School's curriculum for climate change reduction.

GG continues that agriculture has a big impact on the total CO2 emissions, but this is something that the PC cannot influence, the total emissions of the Parish are still lower than that of neighbouring villages. GG states that targeting individual household consumption would be a good starting point for reducing SSG's carbon footprint.

PH informs that the agricultural aspect of the data takes into consideration the number of cows in the village, therefore SSG has a high output. Burrowbridge has a high output due to the dredging of the River Parrett. PH states that agriculture is fighting its own battle with regards to carbon footprint and climate change, he agrees that targeting individual household consumption would be a good starting point.

GG states that for now the FSG will focus on achievable, cost effective and measurable projects to lower the carbon footprint of the village.

179. Floods

DH reports the flooding at the top of Dark Lane has improved.

180. Playing Fields

GG reports that in the past the PC has funded the playing field pavilion's insurance, but with the pavilion now being a new building, the insurance premium quote has risen from £183 - £560 per year. GG asks if the PC would be willing to continue to pay the premium.

SS states that previous insurance premiums only included public liability insurance with the latest quote including insurance for building as well.

HV asks what will be covered by the insurance at the higher rate.

GG recommends the PFMC are sent a grant application form and submit the details of the insurance policy.

**GG to circulate the grant application form to the PFMC and request policy details.
Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.**

181. Heart of The Village

GG reports that since the resignation of NS, there is no longer a PC representative on the committee.

GG continues that ITV were filming at the shop/pub which should be aired in the near future.

DH queries the start time of the last HDTV meeting and requests the start time remain the same as prior meetings.

HV requests the start times of the HDTV meetings be better publicised and asks who a representative for the PC could be.

PH suggests a HDTV committee member could be asked to feed back to the PC, but this may not be deemed necessary as the HDTV already technically do this by holding public meetings.

Clerk to add the item of a HDTV representative to the next agenda.

182. Village Website

Nothing to report.

183. Broadband

Nothing to report.

184. Consultations and Surveys

Right to regenerate consultation

GG proposes no response to the consultation is made. HV seconds the motion, all in favour.

185. Financial Matters

Standing Order

01-01-21 K de Silva – Clerks Salary

£283.33

Payments for Authorisation

None received.

Payments Received

None received.

GG proposes the payment is made, JH seconds the motion, all were in favour.

Bank reconciliation to the end of January was checked by JP.

The PC quarterly accounts were circulated by the Clerk 02-02-21 – No comments were made.

The Clerk informs that the PC has attempted to pay the outstanding Rockwell Sign and Print invoice (Min 165) on two occasions, but it has bounced back into the PC account under a COR (correction) code. The Clerk continues she has sent 3 emails to the company and has received no response.

The Clerk requests once contact is re-established, the invoice can be paid immediately. All agree.

186. Other items for discussion

Revision of the Burial Ground Policy

The Clerk reports that due to some recent requests for interment in the burial ground, there is a requirement to update the burial ground regulations to include the wording 'Parishioner would include those born in the village'.

GG reads that the amendment to Para 1 of the regulations should read as follows.

The word Parishioner used in the table of fees means a person who was either born in the Parish, had lived in the Parish for twenty years and was a resident elsewhere, or who at the time of death or during the past five years has been an inhabitant of the Parish, or in the case of a child, where either or both parents are or were such inhabitants. The word Non-Parishioner includes every person who is not a Parishioner as before defined. At the discretion of the Parish Council other circumstances may be considered"

All agree to the suggested amendment of Para1 of the burial ground regs.

GG to update the website documents.

Clerk to update the PC's electronic documents.

DH asks that once the Royal Oak is in operation could the post box be relocated to outside the pub/shop.

SS states there is already issues with people parking directly outside the shop rather than using the car park. Relocating the post box could exasperate these issues.

HV, JP and JH agree traffic and parking in the centre of the village is becoming a growing issue.

Clerk to add traffic and Parking issues in the village centre to the next agenda.

PH would like to mention that the Headmistress assembly that has been published on local social platforms is very good and would urge people to watch it and contribute.

GG thanks DF for his assistance with the implementation of the 20MPH speed limit outside of the school that has now been actioned.

The Clerk informs that as part of the CiLCA she is expected to annotate and refer to legislation the contents of her written contract.

HV recommends a review of a personnel organisation and contract at the next meeting.

Clerk to add the item personnel organisation and Clerk contract to the next agenda.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.26pm.

The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 8th March 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 28th February 2021.