

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

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

held remotely via Zoom.

Present – Graham Gleed (Chairman), Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair), Heather Venn, Ann Finn, Janice Pearce, Peter House, John Hembrow, Sue Buller (District Councillor) David Fothergill (Arrives at 8.15pm)

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

187. Apologies for absence –David House, 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 8th February were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of interests and dispensations – No declarations of interests and dispensations

Public question time – One member of the public attended to obtain further information on the Climate Forward Strategy Group (FSG) stating they were unable to find minutes of the meetings, principal contact details, and terms of reference. The member of the public also questioned that if there were a low uptake of CIL funding applications for local infrastructure from local organisations, then could the FSG use the money.

GG responds that he and NS are currently setting up dedicated pages on the village website to host all the information for publication from the FSG. GG clarifies there has been an increase in interest from local groups to apply for CIL money. GG continues that all groups and individuals within the village are invited to apply and make suggestions on how to best spend the PC's portion of the CIL funds for infrastructure improvements within the village, with all submissions to be addressed to the Parish Clerk.

GG confirms that he is the principle contact for the Climate FSG and ahead of the documents being made available on the village website, if anyone wishes to obtain the minutes from the two meetings already held, they can do so by requesting them directly from GG

(gghiamgleed@gmail.com) or the Parish Clerk (sggparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk).

Two members of the public were attending as candidates for the Parish Councillor vacancy; six members of the public were attending to observe.

188. Planning

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

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 03/02/21

36/20/018 Matchams Farm. Curload, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a general-purpose agricultural storage lean to building.

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 17/02/21

36/20/029 The Gables. Curload, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a timber clad chicken house and polytunnel on land to the South (retention of works already undertaken)

APPLICATION WITHDRAWN 27/02/21

Information on the Phosphate Calculator adopted by SWTC.

GG reports that Somerset's four district councils and SCC have published a Phosphate calculator to assist with the delay and uncertainty around planning applications following recent guidance over unacceptable amounts of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site.

GG continues that it is requested that developers and planning application submissions use the calculator to determine the level of phosphates a proposed development will generate and this will form part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

GG informs the types of development will include:

- New residential units – including tourism accommodation, traveller sites/pitches.

- Commercial developments – where overnight accommodation is provided.
- Agricultural development – additional barns, slurry stores where it is likely to increase the herd size.
- Prior notifications of agricultural development where, as a result of the development, herd size may increase. Also, prior notifications for change of use of office to dwellings and agricultural use to dwellings.
- Anaerobic Digesters
- Possibly some tourism attractions

GG states that this will be relevant for the parish as it forms part of the Somerset Levels.

PH states that until the District Councils can figure out how the calculator works properly, all decisions on planning applications should stop.

SB responds that the planning department is already backlogged, with no end dates in sight.

189. Resolve - Proposed amendment to the PC standing Orders Section 12 Voting

GG proposes that for the purpose of voting for the co-option of a new Parish Councillor; during periods where the Council meetings are held remotely under NALC guidance, such as the C19 pandemic – in the event that a paper ballot is not possible and a simple show of hands is not appropriate, then votes shall be cast/collected digitally, using a polling for meetings feature/an equivalent or by any agreed digital means. HV seconds the motion, with all in favour.

190. Co-option for the Parish Councillor Vacancy

GG reports that there have been two applicants for the Parish Councillor vacancy and welcomes the applicants Mrs Jane Pine and Mr Simon Dauncey.

GG explains the process - each candidate will be invited to speak, followed by a Q&A from members of the PC. The vote shall be cast confidentially via the Zoom chat feature, with votes being cast directly to the Clerk. The Chairman shall seek proposers and seconders for each nomination prior to the votes being cast. In order to be co-opted onto the Council, the candidates must receive an absolute majority of the vote of those present and voting.

GG continues that if some discussion is required to discuss the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Council will resolve to exclude the members of the public to the waiting room.

GG invites Jane Pine to address the PC.

Mrs Jane Pine (MJP) informs that she has lived at Cames Mead Farm in Meare Green for 43 years. She has an extensive work history in the navy, accountancy, consultancy and with the Ministry of Agriculture which have provided her with the life skills that she believes would be an attribute to the PC.

MJP continues that she is very organised, runs the SSG bridge club as well as her farm and businesses, assists with local events and with the church in North Curry.

MJP has an interest in the countryside, flora and fauna and environmental issues. MJP feels she could contribute to improving the Village's eco status. MJP states she would like to work towards improvement of infrastructure in the village including electric and phone coverage, introducing tech help groups, supporting loneliness and mental health and once restrictions allow, encouraging schools to visit farms.

GG thanks MJP for her introduction and welcomes Simon Dauncey to address the PC.

Mr Simon Dauncey (SD) firstly commends MJP for an impressive introduction. SD continues that he has lived in the village for two and a half years, and although he may lack in local knowledge of the area, he has been committed to the village since relocating here by contributing in the HOTV project.

SD continues that he has a background in shipping and working in the Middle East for oil companies before leaving to be a rep in the UK and eventually managing his own pub near Bristol for 18 years.

SD informs he feels passionately about the village and would put his heart and soul into his further contributions if elected.

GG thanks SD and asks the PC if they have any questions for the candidates.

SS asks: 'what would be your top two priorities for the Parish Council and the Villagers?'

SD responds that he wishes to work towards the constant improvement of the village - making it a better place for all, by improving broadband and reducing speed limits. SD states that currently there are no speed limit signs at the top of the village from Stathe until you approach the village hall. SD continues that this is an accident waiting to happen and he would like to contribute to making SSG a safer place.

MJP responds that she wishes to improve the quality of life for the community by providing a good service, helping the village to thrive by moving forward and not stagnating.

GG asks if there are any more questions for the candidates. There were none. GG removes the candidates from the meeting to the waiting room and asks if the PC wish to discuss the attributes of each candidate. The PC agree to this and resolve to remove the public from the meeting.

Each candidate is nominated and seconded by a member of the PC, a discussion takes place followed by a confidential vote, with votes are cast privately and directly to the Parish Clerk.

GG allows the candidates and members of the public back into the meeting.

The Clerk informs that Simon Dauncey has been voted onto the PC with an absolute majority. The Clerk continues that she will send the declaration of acceptance of office and the register of interest form and requests that it is returned as soon as possible, as it must be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer at SWT within 28 days of co-option.

GG thanks MJP for standing as a candidate. GG commends MJP for her great presentation and summary. GG invites MJP to stand again if there is another casual vacancy or at the 2023 elections.

(One member of the public leaves and DF joins the meeting)

191. Communication to local landowners and farmers prior to the maize and crop planting.

GG refers to a proposed draft correspondence circulated to the PC prior to the meeting. There is some discussion on the content, amendments made, and the correspondence is agreed.

CS reports that with the field from Polkesfield to Woodhill already muck sprayed, including the footpath, there is some urgency in circulating the proposed communication. HV suggests the communication should urge respect for the verges - with access onto the road at Woodhill being awful.

PH responds it should be one letter, one message.

GG recommends the topic of hedges and verges should be a discussion point for the Climate FSG.

JH requests a map of the village including footpaths should be included in the communication.

JH to provide addresses for intended recipients of the letter.

GG to circulate final draft prior to the Clerk distributing to relevant recipients.

Clerk to add verges to the next agenda.

192. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

GG shares a screen shot of the draft application form for allocation of available CIL funds.

GG states the PC are looking for tangible ideas from the whole community and that this is open to everyone however, all CIL spend must be channelled through the PC.

There is discussion about the content of the draft application form.

GG informs he will make the recommended amendments to the form and circulate to the PC for approval prior to distribution. GG continues there has been interest in applying for CIL funding from the Willowset, HOTV and potentially the Meare Green speed reduction initiative.

A member of the public queries timescales for applications and the projects.

GG responds it is an open discussion; collection of ideas and applications is gathering momentum and it will be an agenda item for the foreseeable future.

The Clerk informs that the CIL spending rules stipulate the funds must be spent within five years of receipt otherwise the money must be returned to the developer. All spend is required to conform with SWT guidance on infrastructure spending otherwise the PC will be liable to repay the amount spent.

HV asks for clarification on the amount of CIL the PC are in receipt of.

Clerk to confirm actual amounts and payment schedule with the CIL officer at SWT and publish in the minutes.

CIL expected from the Willey Road development = £64,390.70

The PC is in current receipt of £32,195.35 of this money with the third and final payment of £32,195.35 due in October. This is later than expected due to developers deferring payments for 6 months due to the C19 pandemic. There is also £907.42 from a development of Woodhill received in October 2020. The total figure for all CIL PC portion is expected to be £65,298.12 by October 2021.

193. Road traffic, parking in the square and around the centre of the village

The Clerk reports that she has provisionally discussed with the local PCSO, Steve Chapman (SC), to gauge if there are sufficient resources available to assist with the growing parking issue within the village. The Clerk continues that the response was positive. SC offered assistance in the form of “adhoc walks on the beat” if required, with enforcement only being possible if there is a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in place around the school.

DF informs that the 20mph within the vicinity of the school is advisory - it is not a TRO.

GG asks members of the PC for their input on the best way to approach this issue.

SS reports that staff from the school are currently using the car park at the Royal Oak (RO). GG responds that this is being met with some resistance from the RO, but it is a good start to reduce the number of cars parked on the roads surrounding the village square.

SS states that the RO is not the only available location in the village in which to park safely - especially when dropping off or picking up school children. There is also the Village Hall car park, the Playing Fields car park, and the Church car park – all of which can be used.

GG informs that it is planned for the bay directly outside of the shop at the RO to be designated as a blue badge parking bay, but this will require submission of a planning application for the curb to be dropped, which could happen in due course.

A member of the public questions why the area cannot receive double yellow lines.

HV responds that she heavily participated in the original extending of the yellow lines which involved a considerable amount of discussion. HV continues that people will ignore yellow lines, especially if they are only parking there to pick up and collect children from the school.

DF informs that the cost implications are not with the line painting itself, but with the TROs that are required – with yellow lines on both sides of the roads this lends itself to increasing the natural speed of the road which is not the desired outcome.

GG states that yellow lines will be a last resort, the community must continue to encourage safer parking away from the central area of the village and recommends the PC should keep the item on future agendas.

Clerk to add the item to the agenda for the next meeting.

194. Phone Box at the Playing Field

GG reports a member of the community remains enthusiastic to transform the phone box from its current state of dilapidation. The member of the community has agreed to provide an estimated cost for this and will attend the next PC meeting.

AF enquires if there has ever been an agreed decision on the purpose of the phone box. GG responds there have been a few suggestions including a tourist information spot and this should be addressed at the next meeting.

Clerk to add the item to the agenda for the next meeting.

195. Resuming face to face meetings from May

The Clerk reports that as of 7th May 2021 the PC will be expected to hold face to face meetings - with NALC indicating there is little likelihood of the C19 guidance being revised to allow for remote meetings beyond this date. The Clerk continues that the APM, and AGM are also a consideration. Last year the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) was cancelled due to the pandemic, but this year it is expected that the PC should hold the meeting within the usual timeframe (between 1st March and 1st June), with the Annual General Meeting being held prior to the May PC meeting. The Clerk has queried this with SALC and based upon the feedback, the PC would be able to hold the APM and AGM via zoom if it were within the timeframe.

The Clerk continues that in order for the PC to hold face to face meetings from May, and for those meetings to adhere to social distancing guidelines, meetings would need to be held in the main hall as the meeting room has insufficient space for social distancing.

HV states that she would not be attending in May due to shielding and questions how a PC can meet in person, yet families cannot.

DF responds that the Clerk is correct, there is no option for hybrid face to face and remote attendance, but the PC could meet in person and ask for members of the community to participate via Zoom until social distancing guidelines are relaxed. DF continues that under current social distancing guidelines the PC meeting is considered to be a business meeting.

JH suggests that as the timeframe to hold the APM is before the planned relaxation of social distancing guidelines, many villagers may not wish to attend in person. JH recommends holding the APM via Zoom ahead of the 7th of May expiration date for remote meetings. JH continues that if the date of the May PC meeting were rearranged then the AGM and PC meeting could also both occur remotely, this allows time before June's meeting to review the current pandemic issues.

GG proposes the APM, AGM and May PC meeting be held virtually via Zoom. The APM would be held on Tuesday 27th April 2021, both the AGM and May PC meeting would be held on Tuesday 4th May 2021, with the AGM commencing immediately before the PC meeting. Face-to-face meetings would then resume as normal from June (on the second Monday of each month) in the main village hall. SS seconds the motion, all in favour.

Clerk to book the village hall from 14th June to the end of the year.

196. Parish Online subscription

GG reports that whilst working with the Somerset Levels Forum a digital mapping tool called Parish Online has come to his attention. GG continues that he has explored the tool on a free one-month trial and believes it would be beneficial for the PC. It is widely used amongst South Somerset and is a useful tool for Parish Councils to record a wide variety of data including the asset register, local amenities, footpaths, species, flood zones, environmental and ecological data.

GG shows a demonstration of the tool to the PC.

GG continues that the annual subscription for the Parish Online software is £70 and proposes the PC purchase the tool as it would provide beneficial material and be a valuable tool for looking at ways of improving the village.

HV asks how many users would be able to use the tool – would all Parish Councillors have access?

GG responds that there would be no limit on users, but it would be advisable that only designated people/person upload information onto the tool to avoid duplication and overcrowding of data.

GG proposes the PC purchase the Parish Online tool for 12 months at a cost of £70, JP seconds the motion, all in favour.

GG to arrange purchase of the tool and enquire if there is a read-only facility within it.

197. Covid 19

DF reports that with Schools returning today, the target was to have case numbers below 40 per 100,000, with the latest published figures indicating case numbers at 39.7 per 100,000 across the County. The SWT district numbers are currently at 24 per 100,000 and falling with slightly higher case numbers in Sedgemoor. DF continues that there are still a couple of hotspots within the county, but care home cases are stabilising and 50% of the Somerset population has now received their first vaccination.

DF states that the greatest danger now is complacency; it is extremely important that people do not relax and adhere to the guidelines until lockdown and social distancing regulations end on the anticipated date of 21st June 2021.

198. Willey Road Housing Development

GG reports that he has contacted the developer with regards to the wall and visibility splay at the entrance to the site. The developer confirms the wall is in the exact position as shown on the submitted plans, there should have been a hedge that has not been planted but this should allow for wider footpath access.

GG continues that with regards to the topic of the wall/fence along the footpath behind Church Close, the developer has informed that a close board fence would be used and there are no plans for a wall to be built.

HV asks who will be responsible for the upkeep of the fence – suggesting over a longer period a wall would require less maintenance than a fence. SS adds that a fence and its maintenance could present an issue for the occupants of one house on Church Close in particular.

HV states the maintenance of the fence is an issue that should be resolved.

GG to contact the developer to request a wall partitioning the house affected and the footpath.

GG reports he has spoken to the previous footpath officer who recognises there is a commitment to replace the stile leading from Church Close with a gate, but due to a family bereavement no date for the replacement has yet been set.

GG continues that the Wessex Water turning space and 20m transition zone has been assigned to a new case officer at SWT. The newly assigned case officer is requesting a full planning application is submitted for the transition zone. The case officer is requesting a post and rail fence is erected which has initiated some discussion between the planning department and the developer.

SS expresses concern that this will impact the privacy of the gardens for the residents of Church Close.

HV enquires about the plans on the originally agreed application.

SB states plans for the transition zone were set out in the original application and she remembers specifically requesting hedging.

A member of the public informs they have recently spoken to a planning officer at SWT with regards to the transition zone. The officer suggested submission of a separate planning application would alter the initially agreed landscaping.

HV questions why the developer can remove the hedge from the initial plan at the entrance but not alter the fence. HV requests that the application is checked and states the recent events are farcical.

GG recommends the transition zone is kept on the agenda.

Clerk to add the item to the next meeting agenda.

199. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports that she emailed the traffic management officer at SCC to confirm the proposed starting point of the 30 MPH zone in Meare Green (Min. 176.). As no response was received, the Clerk emailed again to request an update prior to the PC meeting yet no reply was forthcoming. The Clerk suggests that as the process and timeline initially indicated approximately 8 weeks to carry out a detailed design then 2 weeks for the TRO – this work may be under way. The Clerk will endeavour to obtain an update before the next PC meeting.

200. Speed watch

Due to the current lockdown the speed watch is not permitted to take place.

201. Footpaths

CS reports that she has recently walked the Footpath from Curload to Slough Court stating it is passable and encourages people to walk this route.

202. Climate/Environmental Issues

Climate Forward Strategy Group Update

GG reports that the second meeting of the FSG was held on 22nd February which included an interesting article from Paul Parmenter on hedges, GG will circulate this to the PC.

JP reports she has spoken to the headteacher at the village primary school with regards to a collaboration between the school and the FSG to include local climate change within the curriculum. JP continues that the headteacher was very keen for years 3-6 to include local climate issues in their projects, with the possibility of the children creating their own climate group. JP recommends a video presentation for the school could be considered.

HV requests copies of the minutes are circulated to the PC.

GG informs that the current members of the FSG are Graham Gleed, Charlotte Sundquist, Janice Pearce, Paul Parmenter, Trevor Williams, Peter House, Laura Jensen, Sara Sollis and Alex Lawrie.

If you would like to join the FSG or participate in the next meeting this will be held virtually by Zoom on Monday 22nd March at 7pm. Co-ordinates, the agenda for the meeting and information can be obtained by emailing grahamgleed@gmail.com with a dedicated link on the village website being operational in the near future.

203. Floods

Nothing to report.

204. Playing Field

Insurance grant request for the Pavilion

GG reports that the PC has historically paid the insurance premium for the Playing Fields. The PFMC has submitted a grant application to the PC for this years' premium, which has increased considerably due to the new policy covering the pavilion and the existing liability insurance. The total cost of the grant application is £568.36.

GG proposes the PC grant the £568.36 to the PFMC for the insurance, SS seconds the motion, all were in favour.

Clerk to liaise with the PFMC for payment of the grant.

GG reports the PFMC have also submitted a grant application to assist with the loss of income raised for the Stoke Stampede which is relied upon for the upkeep of the playing field, this item will be added to the next agenda.

Clerk to add the item to the agenda for the next meeting.

205. Heart of the Village

Nothing to report.

206. Village Website

Nothing to report.

207. Broadband

Nothing to report.

208. Consultations and Surveys

West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine revised draft neighbourhood plan.

It was agreed no PC response was required.

NALC Model design code consultation

It was agreed not to respond.

SWT Customer Survey

It was agreed the Clerk could respond on behalf of the PC.

209. Financial Matters

Standing Order

01-03-21 K de Silva – Clerks Salary £283.33

Payments for authorisation

01-03-21 K de Silva – Clerks Expenses – Black and Colour ink £25.20

The Clerk reports that the payment issue to Rockwell Print and Sign (Min 165) has been resolved as the invoice included an incorrect account number and requests this payment is now made.

Payments received.

SSG Meals on Wheels – Sponsorship of the Spring Newsletter £63.00

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

Other financial items

Bank reconciliation to the end of February completed by JP.

SS has offered to complete the bank reconciliation checks for the next 3 months.

Other Items for discussion

Personnel organisation and contract for the Clerk

*GG requests that this is a confidential matter to discuss the Clerks performance and recommends members of the public are removed from the meeting, all agree.
(8 members, David Fothergill and Sue Buller leave the meeting.)*

The Clerks performance is discussed.

On considering the Clerks performance and as no remuneration has been received in 2 years of being in the role, GG proposes the Clerk receives a salary increase in line with the NALC pay scale. SS seconds the motion, all were in favour.

Clerk to add the remuneration to the next agenda for official approval.

It is agreed that the personnel organisation for the Clerk will include Heather Venn, Sara Sollis and Peter House.

The Clerk reports that a letter which was received by a member of the community requires a response authorising.

GG to amend the response for circulation.

HV requests that all communications and publications made on behalf of the PC should be circulated to all members of the PC for approval prior to being sent or published. HV states that publications should be a summary of the meeting and not a judgement. All agree.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.43pm.

The next meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Monday 12th April 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 2nd April 2021.

DRAFT