

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 14th June 2021.

Held in The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.

Present – Graham Glead (Chairman), Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair), Ann Finn, Janice Pearce, John Hembrow, Peter House, Simon Dauncey, Sue Buller (District Councillor), Cllr. Sue Buller (District Councillor) David Fothergill (Arrives at 8.10pm)

In Attendance – Kelly de Silva (Clerk), Charlotte Sundquist (Footpath Officer) and twelve members of the public

45. Apologies for absence – Heather Venn, David Fothergill (will arrive at 8.15pm)

Minutes of the previous meeting – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Tuesday 4th May 2021 were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of Interests and Dispensations – SS declares an interest in Minute 46 - planning application 36/21/0015.

Public Question Time – One member of the public is in attendance with regards to the footpath behind the houses in Church Close. They state that they wish to hold their own conversations with the developer - no matter what the outcome of this evening's discussions. They ask what the relationship is between the PC and the developer.

GG responds it is a purely professional relationship; normally through intermediary communications with their representative on specific subject matters.

GG informs a number of residents of Church Close are in direct communication with the developer already; there is no exclusivity on the matter.

One member of the public states that at the previous meeting the PC offered support to 'No Mow May', yet the area by the village noticeboard was mowed 3 days before the end of May which resulted in mowing of the wildflowers growing there. The Clerk responds that the contractor for grass maintenance was contacted and specifically requested not to mow or strim throughout May in order to support the initiative. GG reports the mowing may have been done by the adjoining house to the area. The member of the public reports they have been researching CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and although this item will be the subject of debate later in the meeting, they wish to seek clarification on the processes, timelines, applications; and how the reward process will be managed. They wish to raise concerns that applications already submitted may be subject of active discussions.

GG responds that applications have been registered but no decisions on CIL allocation will be made until completion of a public consultation.

The member of the public raises concerns over the wording, suggesting that it should be 'expressions of interests in CIL funding allocation' rather than 'applications' at this preliminary stage.

A member of the public is also attending regarding Minute 50 – CIL and would like to request the PC revisit the timescale for the submission of bids for CIL funding because September allows insufficient time for some Village groups to apply. The member of the public also requests the final sum figure, referring to minute 29, when Cllr Phil Stone reported North Curry PC had seen changes from original figures expected.

GG responds that the comments made by Cllr Phil Stone related to a different topic. GG continues that the PC has been in frequent contact with the CIL Officer at SWT, who has confirmed the final sum of CIL from the Willey Road development will be £64,390.47 with the PC currently being in receipt of £32,195.35. The final tranche of £32,195.35 is due in October as it was delayed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. GG informs the PC is yet to agree a policy to make best use of the CIL money, with many factors still to be considered, GG agrees the timeline should be revised for submissions from local groups.

Two members of the public were in attendance with regards to CIL, stating the impact of the new housing development upon local infrastructure was already apparent. They wished to highlight the urgency of the Willowset's application for CIL funding and to seek clarity on timescale for decisions. They informed that the setting was already at capacity and operating with 6 extra spaces using outdoor facilities. They questioned if there would be an answer for securing funding sooner rather than later, as a degree of certainty for securing the funding was required.

GG responds that the PC understand the implications the development will have on the Willowset, and this will be discussed later in the meeting.

One member of the public is in attendance to observe any comments on the proposed close board fencing on the footpath leading from Church Close to the allotments and development.

46. Planning

36/21/0010 Court Cottage. Stoke Road, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory -Erection of an extension to storage building at the rear

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 07/05/21

36/21/0006 The Gables. Curload, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a chicken house, chicken run, polytunnel and storage building (retention of works already undertaken)

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 17/05/21

36/21/0019 Slough Court, Slough Lane, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of 5 No bulk feed bins and silage clamps (part retrospective)

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 09/04/21

36/21/0015 Variations of conditions Nos. 1,2,3,5,12,13,15,17,18,19,21 and 22 with removal of condition Nos. 4,9,11,14 and 16 from application 36/18/0048 on land adjacent to Willey Road, Stoke St Gregory

The following response was agreed:

“During discussions, this complicated application was divided into 5 main points for a response to SWT planning.

- 1. Use of close boarded fencing for rear curtilages of Plots 21-27 along the Northern and Eastern boundaries of the development site.*

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support the use of a close board fence in keeping with similar fencing within the housing development which will also provide security to the properties aligning the area.”

- 2. Replacement of hedge with close board fencing in the Southwest corner of the development*

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed to not support the removal of the hedge, stating it should remain as an established hedge providing greenspace for wildlife habitat.”

- 3. Re-location of approved stone wall by 1m South at the entrance to the development site and adjacent to Plot 31, with hedge planting*

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed to not support the re-location of the wall and proposed hedge planting as this over time, hedge growth would affect the visibility splay of the development onto the Willey Road, and is not deemed necessary with the architectural feature of the current wall.”

- 4. Re-orientation and re-positioning of a foul pumping station in the South-eastern portion of the site and associated access requirements as agreed with Wessex water.*

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed to support the repositioning of the pumping station to its current position versus the original plan as it has already been installed enabling the curtilage for

No16 Church Close to be similar to other houses along the buffer, and also provides adequate access to the allotments”.

5. *Change of use of land along the Southern boundary from landscape buffer to residential curtilage and associated operational works (fencing)*

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support the change of use to residential curtilage as it offers security to aligning properties which common land would not”.

36/21/0017 Crossways Farm. Slough Lane, Stoke St Gregory – Demolition of barns and erection of 2 No. dwellings with associated works and change of use of land from agricultural to residential. The following response was agreed:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed unanimously to support this application.”

36/21/0013 5 Broomfield Park, Willey Road, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a timber BBQ lodge to the rear of the dwelling.

The following response was agreed:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed unanimously to support this application.”

36/21/0019 Hollyhocks. Woodhill Farm, Stoke St Gregory – Erection of a porch to the front of the dwelling.

The following response was agreed:

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed unanimously to support this application.”

(DF joins the meeting)

47. Approve and sign the 2020-21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

GG reports that Elizabeth Hembrow has recently completed the independent internal audit of the Parish Council financial records. All was deemed to be in good order and all internal control objectives had been adhered to.

GG informs that Elizabeth Hembrow will stand down as the internal auditor. GG expresses the gratitude of the PC for many years of diligent and thorough auditing of the PC accounts.

47.1 Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed that the annual governance statement in Section 1 of the AGAR, which requires the PC to ensure a sound system of internal control is in place for the preparation of the accounting statements, was adhered to and signed by the Chair.

47.2 Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed that the accounting statement in Section 2 of the AGAR as presented by the Clerk/RFO were accurate for the 2020-21 financial year and signed by the Chair.

KdS to sign as Clerk/RFO and send the AGAR to the external auditors

KdS to confirm the dates for the period for the exercise of public rights and send to NS for publication on the website.

48. Approve and Sign the Climate Emergency Grant Agreement

GG reports the agreement from Somerset County Council for the grant from the Climate Emergency Fund for solar panels to be installed at The Royal Oak has been circulated to members of the PC for review prior to the meeting (E20-05-21).

All agreed with the content of the agreement, and it was signed by the Chair.

Clerk to send signed agreement to the Climate Change Investment Fund Manager at SCC.

49. Casual Vacancy for a Parish Councillor

The Clerk reports the Electoral Services Manager at SWT had confirmed on 11-06-21 that no requests for an election were received and the co-option process may now proceed.

GG reports that 5 members of the community had expressed an interest in filling the vacancy to date. *If you are interested in becoming a member of the Parish Council, application forms are available on the Village website www.stokestgregory.org or can be obtained from the Clerk: Kelly de Silva – ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk 07701 053903. The PC hope to co-opt the new member at the next Parish Council meeting on Monday 12th July 2021. The deadline for submission of application forms to the Clerk is Friday 2nd July 2021.*

50. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

GG reports the PC portion of CIL from the Willey Road development will be £64,390.43 with the final tranche of £32,195.35 due in October 2021. There was also a payment received of £907.42 from the development of Woodhill Barn received 27-10-2020 providing a total of £65,298.12 in PC CIL funds for allocation.

GG reports local groups were invited to express an interest in applying for CIL funds with an application form available from the Clerk. GG expresses that it is obvious a more robust process would be required in order to justify the allocation, distribution and expenditure of the PC CIL money.

GG informs that the Clerk has researched the approach of similarly sized Parish Councils to CIL spending, in particular Gislingham PC which has a broadly comparable CIL allocation to that of SSG. GG continues that SD contacted Gislingham Parish Council who shared the template of the questionnaire that was distributed to all members of the community. Investment was determined by the level of response each item received.

GG states this questionnaire was a good template and it could be modified for SSG to be circulated to every resident in the village electronically or by hand – it is important that all residents be included in the consultation.

GG recommends that until the consultation is complete, no decisions should be made for allocation, stating key decisions would need to be made on whether the full sum was allocated or some was retained for future use as the PC's has 5 years in which to spend its CIL allocation. GG states the importance of the CIL money benefiting the whole community and the village's infrastructure. The request to extend the timeline for applications to be made would be wise to heed, although this would make it very difficult to guarantee the certainty of CIL funding for the amount requested of £61,467.24 to the Willowset at this time.

SS states that the PC must engage with the community and understand the priorities of the residents regarding what infrastructure they feel is required and should be supported through CIL funding. SS informs that the PC are unable to allocate CIL funding directly to the School or the Church. The Clerk confirms that under Section 8 of the Local Government Act 1894, the PC would not be able to offer financial support to the Church or the local Church of England School as there is a prohibition in legislation.

SD recommends that the whole community should be involved in the consultation, including high school aged children as they currently have no facilities within the village.

SS agrees with SD, stating that anti-social behaviour is already becoming a problem on the Playing Fields and at The Village Hall due to the lack of facilities for older children within the village.

A representative of the Willowset informs that the setting will be massively impacted by the Willey Road Housing Development and it is a key infrastructural issue. They continue that they have received clarity from the meeting this evening that the setting cannot rely on immediate PC CIL funding, but the Willowset do not want a tent to be able to accommodate extra places, they require a building to provide the standard of service they are committed to delivering, and they need to find a solution soon. They continue that due to SCC formulas the Willowset are not eligible to apply for grant funding to support their project of extension and a feasibility study needs to be devised urgently. SS informs the PC appreciate this and will seek to have a resolution hopefully before Christmas.

JH adds that expressions of interest have been made by several bodies within the community and until the survey/questionnaire phase is complete, the PC would not be able to consider the Willow set's application in depth, ahead of other expressions of interest.

GG suggests a separate meeting is held with representatives of the PC and the Willowset to attain the facts around the current situation at the setting and how the PC can support them in overcoming the current crisis.

GG, SS, JP, and SD to arrange a meeting with the Willowset.

SS asks what a realistic timescale for the submission of applications to the PC could be. GG responds that the final and most significant amount of the CIL money would be due in October 2020, but the consultation questionnaire should be compiled and distributed as soon as possible.

SS and SD to formulate the survey questionnaire to circulate to the members of the PC with the aim of distribution of the survey to the residents of the community by early July.

(Six members of the public leave)

GG informs the PC received a suggestion from a member of the community requesting safe access route for villagers to walk between the centre of the Village to Coates Visitor Centre, either by a marked-out path on the road combined with traffic calming measures such as chicanes or a paved pathway around fields.

SS states although this is a noble gesture, it may be hard to achieve, but the implementation of the 30 MPH speed limit in Meare Green should assist with safer access.

A member of the public states that wording is key, and CIL applications should be referred to as an 'expression of interest'. They continue by questioning the purpose of the proposed meeting with the Willowset.

AF responds that the meeting with the Willowset is a fact-finding exercise in order to attain key information about the setting and its current capacity issues.

A member of the public questions whether the Willowset would be allowed to build in the school grounds. GG responds that it is not appropriate to continue the conversation in the absence of the representatives of the Willowset as they have now left the meeting.

51. Road Traffic and Parking in the Square and around the Centre of the Village

GG reports that there has been a significant improvement with the parking issues since the school and Willowset staff now use other car parking facilities provided in the village. A member of the public states that cars parked outside the old bakery cause other road users to drive wide into the blind corner at Willey Road / Huntham Lane. GG responds that although these parked cars can be a nuisance for the residents in the square, they do act as a traffic calming measure - meaning vehicles must slow down. GG requests the situation is monitored for another month then removed from the agenda if there are no significant issues.

52. Phone Box at the Playing Fields

GG reports that work on the old phone box is ongoing, but it is slow progress to remove and clean glass panels and prepare the metal to paint.

53. Request for a dog waste bin on Woodhill

GG reports a correspondence from a resident at Woodhill was circulated to the PC (E17-05-21) requesting another dog waste bin was installed on Woodhill.

SS suggests that additional dog bins alone would not resolve the issue, and more could be done. SS continues that there has been a dramatic increase in dogs in the village.

GG enquires as to the cost implications for installation of the additional dog waste bin. The Clerk responds that the bin installed by the Village Hall 2 years ago cost £345.00+VAT and emptying service is £907.64+VAT annually.

GG requests a quote for an additional dog waste bin and also an assessment of the requirement for more bins.

Clerk to contact SWT for quotation. Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

54. Donation in memory of Parish Councillor David House

GG proposes a donation of £200 be made to the RABI (Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) in memory of the late Parish Councillor David House. SS seconds the motion, all were in favour.

55. Review of the Standing Orders

GG reports an action from the PC AGM was to review the standing orders as they have not been reviewed since November 2016. GG continues that on review of the standing orders, the only issue noted was clause 1e had been omitted, however this was disclaimed at the start of the document as the Standing orders are based on a model document issued by Somerset Association of Local Councils. All agreed the standing orders were relevant and up to date.

Clerk to amend the date reviewed on the Standing Orders.

56. Covid 19

DF reports that in the last 10 days cases in Somerset have quadrupled, with figures rising in all four districts. DF continues that household transmissions appear to be driving these current figures, with a teenage sleepover presenting a significant rise in cases in one area.

DF informs that 80% of the adult population in Somerset had now received a single dose of the vaccine, with 60% receiving both doses. It was announced earlier this evening that lockdown restrictions would remain in place until 19th July, with some exceptions being allowed for weddings.

57. Willey Road Housing Development

Allocation of Social Housing for residents of Stoke St Gregory

GG reports that an enquiry was submitted by the PC to the Director of Housing and Lead specialist at SWT on the request of HV, to ascertain the procedures for residents to apply for the Social Housing on the new development. GG continues that the housing would not be available until Autumn 2021. GG informs that the Homefinder policies and procedures are extremely complex.

SS states that there are rigorous processes to go through – affordability, credit checks, sustainable tenancies. SS continues that having local connections is important, but MAPA and domestic abuse victims would also be considered higher on a points system.

AF enquires if the social housing is likely to be oversubscribed. SS responds oversubscription is a definite possibility.

58. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports she had contacted the Traffic Engineer at SCC for an update since the last meeting. The Traffic Engineer sent apologies that they had still not been able to visit the site with a technician to agree locations for posts and signs. They accept it was originally stated that this would be done in March, but the department had been inundated with requests and trying to keep on top of things was a challenge. Hopefully a date to visit the site would be agreed for week commencing 20th June, with an update on proposals sent to the PC in time for the next meeting.

Speed Watch

Due to the current C19 restrictions, no speed watch has taken place.

59. Footpaths

Removal of Gainsload Bridge, Athelney

GG reports that further to a communication circulated by PH regarding the proposed removal of the Gainsload Bridge, the issue had now resolved itself with Network Rail citing “In light of recent information the proposal to seek the closure of this structure has been abandoned and it will be maintained accordingly in the future”

East Side Footpath on the Willey Road

GG reports that a Landowner had offered land free of charge to the East-Side of the Willey Road to Slough Lane for a footpath/pavement to be installed at the cost of the PC. GG informs that to cover the cost of installation of a pavement, CIL funding would need to be considered. PH recommends that a footpath through the field may be a safer and more cost-effective option to maintain the safety of

walkers on that stretch of road. GG agrees to discuss this option with the landowner.

GG to contact the landowner regarding the footpath proposal

KdS to add the item to the next agenda.

Slurry on Public Footpaths

CA reports the rules around slurry spreading on public footpaths appear to be conflicting depending on how those rules are interpreted. CA has contacted the Senior Rights of Way officer at SCC to seek clarification, but no response has been received as yet.

CA states that slurry on the footpath leading from the Playing Fields to Stoke Road during half-term was approximately 2.5 inches deep and spread on compacted soil. CA reports she finds it incredible that this should be permitted to happen.

JH responds that technically dogs should not be walked on footpaths over agricultural land – the footpaths were originally installed to allow access from A-B and are now used for leisure, which is great, but antiquated rules still apply.

CA acknowledges this, but people should not have to walk through effluent to use a public Right of Way. CA states the rules stipulate footpaths must not be blocked by rubble or dung – it is unacceptable and unrealistic.

GG recommends the item is deferred to the next meeting whilst waiting for a response from the Rights of Way Senior Officer.

GG reports the previous Footpath Officer highlighted how some routes they previously strimmed have become overgrown. GG informs he has requested a list of these routes so the strimming can be done by the contractor who also strims verges and mows grassed areas around the village.

60. Climate/Environmental Issues

Stoke Environment Group Update

JP reports that in the last few weeks, Ian Upshall and Fi McQueen have been instrumental in moving projects forward with offers of assistance, support, and suggestions on upcoming projects.

JP continues to build relations with the school to increase knowledge and incorporate environmental issues into School assemblies.

JP thanks the Village Hall committee for allowing use of the Hall free of charge for public meetings of the environment group with the next meeting being held on 24th June at 7pm. JP informs that it is planned to hold discussions on suggestions made, aims of the group, structure, and to raise awareness and engagement of the group.

JP states that the group is moving in a positive direction with an additional 15 residents expressing an interest in the group.

JP expresses the gratitude of the group to Ian Upshall and Fi McQueen for their recent input.

61. Floods

Nothing to report

62. Playing Field

SS reports that the old pavilion is currently being dismantled and removed to its new location in Curload. Once the last remaining parts are removed the area can be made safe and the ground levelled.

SS informs that the Official opening of the pavilion will be held on 21st August which will also celebrate the 70th anniversary of the playing fields. SS continues that a fete is also being planned for the day stating if anyone would be interested in holding a stall to contact the Playing Fields Management committee directly.

63. Heart of the Village

Nothing to report

64. Village Website

Website Administration

GG reports that a candidate has been identified to assist Nick Sloan with the administration of the Village Website.

65. Broadband

Airband – Publicising Options

GG reports that SSG has been identified as an area that may benefit from Airband Broadband but work on this would not commence until Q3 of 2022. It is expected that Airband will visit the village and communicate with residents in due course.

66. Consultations and Surveys

Local Authority Remote Meeting Call for Evidence

GG asks members of the PC for their opinions on whether the PC wish to support the facilitation for virtual meetings.

JH states he thought virtual meetings were useful, whilst being better for the environment and local traffic as no-one was driving to attend.

SS responds that virtual meetings was the right approach at the right time – it works well for standard meetings, but for more important discussions, face-to-face will always be better.

PH adds that holding virtual meetings highlighted some of the issues people have with accessing the internet and broadband quality.

It is agreed that GG will complete the survey taking into account the feedback given from members of the PC.

67. Financial Items

Standing Order

01-06-21 K de Silva – Clerks Salary	£377.00
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Payments for Authorisation

01-06-21 K de Silva – Clerks Expenses – Stamps	£5.10
11-05-21 G Wagen and James – Strim and mow cemetery (April)	£108.00
26-05-21 ICO Annual Data Protection	£40.00
02-06-21 Grant for the Village Hall Charging Points (Min.152 11-01-21)	£940.00
02-06-21 Cumbrian Clock Company – Annual Parish Clock Service	£198.00

Payments Received

None

SS proposes all payments are made, SD seconds the motion, all were in favour.

Other Financial Items

The Clerk informs that the Internal Auditor, Elizabeth Hembrow, requests the PC make a donation in lieu of her fee to The Farming Community Network. All agree a sum of £50 should be made.

Emergency Contact for the defibrillator

The Clerk informs that she has been the guardian and emergency contact for the Defibrillator. Due to the Clerk moving out of the village, she requests someone more local becomes the emergency contact, although she is happy to continue the monthly checks for the SWAFST accreditation scheme.

GG suggests the Royal Oak Manager would be a suitable Emergency Contact.

GG to discuss with Phil Evans being the Emergency Contact for the Defibrillator

68. Other Items for discussion

SS questions the recent missed garden waste bin collections and the fact that collection days have changed. SS expresses the green bins are charged by an annual fee and missed collections have been an issue.

SB responds that due to driver shortages, inexperience and illness, missed collections have been an issue throughout the district.

DF informs that part of the reason for the missed collections has been a change in contractors, a

shortage of drivers; and due to the pandemic, newly recruited drivers have been unable to complete their driving tests.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.16pm.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the main hall at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 14th July at 7.30pm.

Face Masks and Social Distancing will be required.

Please email any items for the agenda to the clerk (ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk) or the Chairman (grahiamgleed@gmail.com) by Friday 2nd July 2021.

DRAFT