

## STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

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

**Present** – Graham Glead (Chairman), Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair), Janice Pearce, Peter House, Simon Dauncey, Sue Buller (District Councillor), Cllr. Sue Buller (District Councillor) Cllr Barrie Hall (District Councillor, David Fothergill (County Councillor)

**In Attendance** – Kelly de Silva (Clerk) and 11 Members of the public

**69. Apologies for absence** – Heather Venn, Ann Finn, John Hembrow and Charlotte Sundquist (Footpath Officer)

**Minutes of the previous meeting** – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman.

**Declarations of Interests and Dispensations** – GG declares an interest in Minute 70 - planning application 36/21/0018 and Minute 88 reimbursement for the Allotment Association Insurance.

**Public Question Time** – One member of the public was present with regards to planning application 36/21/0012 The Pump House. Curload, Stoke St Gregory. The member of the public informs they are attending to represent themselves and others from neighbouring properties. The member of the public would like to object to planning application 36/21/0012 on the following grounds:

- 1 – The planning application concerning the use of the summerhouse (retention of works already undertaken)
- 2 – Scale of the proposed summer house extension
- 3 – Cesspit in a flood area
- 4 – Possible contamination of floodwater from the cesspit
- 5 – Access to the site and poor visibility splay
- 6 – Use of the facilities, citing potential for future domestic use.

The member of the public informs they have met with the applicants and received no assurances regarding the summerhouse works and it is perceived by the member of the public to be of a domestic nature rather than agricultural.

The applicant (present) informs that permanent welfare facilities have been recommended by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) to meet minimal requirements for facilities for each gender. They state that current facilities are not adequate for the intended purpose. They also explained the amount and frequency of work required for crop maintenance. They continue that they were not aware of the unlawful summerhouse and cesspit prior to the purchase of the site.

The member of the public explains that the Christmas tree crop will take 4 years to mature, and it is planned to refurbish the dilapidated bridge for access to the site in this time.

They continue that it is planned to upgrade the cesspit to include a 2-metre snorkel and sealed container reducing the risk of contamination onto the land.

JP enquires how many people are anticipated to make up the workforce. The applicant responds 4 plus themselves and their partner.

GG explains the meeting etiquette - that these comments will be considered but public participation during the meeting should be kept to a minimum and at the discretion of the Chair.

A member of the public has some questions involving the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) discussion but would prefer to wait to see if these were answered during the meeting.

Three members of the public were attending for Minute 71, co-option of a Parish Councillor, all other attendees were observing the meeting.

## **70. Planning**

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

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 06/07/21

**36/21/0020 The Laurels. Stoke Road, Stoke St Gregory** – Replacement of mixed terracotta tiles on external chimney breast with slate coping

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 19/07/21

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

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 19/07/21

**36/21/0021 Hollyhocks. Woodhill, Stoke St Gregory** – Erection of a garden room to the rear (E22-06-21)

The following response was agreed:

*“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council fully support this planning application”*

**36/21/0012 The Pump House. Curload, Stoke St Gregory** – Erection of extension to summerhouse for use as welfare facilities for harvesting and Xmas tree farm on land (Retention of works already undertaken (E02-06-21)

The following response was agreed:

*“While Stoke St Gregory Parish Council commends the initiative being taken to enhance this site, we object to the application on the grounds that:*

- 1. The use of a cesspit to dispose of effluent in a flood risk area adjacent to a water course is not acceptable*
- 2. There is restricted and limited vehicular access on a section of the road with limited visibility and no splay.*
- 3. The use of the proposed welfare facility will be limited and seasonal. If welfare facilities are required for certain periods of the year, then provision of portable facilities is a better option and eliminates the question around the cesspit.*
- 4. Consideration should be giving to purpose-built facilities rather than an adapted structure, located more appropriately on the site”*

**36/21/0018 The Royal Oak. Huntham Lane, Stoke St Gregory** – Installation of solar panels to the North-East and South-West roofs to the rear (E24/06/21)

The following response was agreed:

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

**36/21/0022 The Coal Yard. Woodhill Road, Stoke St Gregory** – Conversion of ground floor workshop to ancillary accommodation for the first-floor accommodation and erection of a steel portal framed storage shed for Blacksmithing

The following response was agreed:

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

**36/21/0024/CQ Holly Farmhouse. Stoke Road, Stoke St Gregory** – Prior approval for proposed change of use from agricultural building into 2 No. dwellings (use class C3) and associated building operations

The following response was agreed:

*“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council fully support this planning application as it is set well off the road with no visual impact on neighbouring properties and will add to the housing stock within the village.”*

## **71. Co-option of a Parish Councillor**

GG informs that a vacancy of the Parish Council had arisen after the passing of Councillor David House.

GG reports that there have been three applicants for the Parish Councillor vacancy and welcomes the applicants Mrs Kathryn Astin, Ms. Anne Merritt and Mr Jason Morgan.

GG explains the process – each candidate will be invited to speak followed by a Q&A from members of the PC. The vote will be cast by ballot paper, and the Clerk will collect the votes from each Parish Councillor by viewing the ballot papers whilst observing social distancing. Due to the number of Parish Councillors present the candidates will be proposed and seconded collectively prior to votes being cast. In order to be co-opted onto the Parish Council, the candidate 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 the candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Council will resolve to exclude members of the public; asking them to leave the meeting room.

GG invites Kathryn Astin to address the PC.

Mrs Kathryn Astin (KA) informs she is 76, retired and actively involved in Village life. KA has been a GP Doctor for 29 Years in an urban environment with 5 years' experience as a Police Surgeon. In this time, KA has awarded medical housing and is aware of current housing issues.

KA has a degree in heritage horticulture, is involved with the WI (including being the Chairperson). KA enjoys gardening, walking, table tennis, is involved with the HOTV and cooks regularly for Meals on Wheels.

KA informs that if appointed she would bring life experience with her, she is a confidant for many people and would like to work towards developing a happy, dynamic, and diverse village.

KA would like to remove the litter from Dark Lane and overgrown nettles, reduce the speed of traffic on Dark Lane and make sure local bus services continue to run in the village.

GG thanks KA and invites Anne Merritt to address the PC.

Mrs Anne Merritt (AM) has lived in the village for 45 years. Both she and her children have attended the village school. AM has been heavily involved in community events and has been on various committees in this time. AM was the cleaner at the Village Hall for 10 Years and was a valued member of the Village Hall committee.

AM would like to be a voice for the younger generation in the village. AM continues that there are currently no facilities for children aged 10 plus and there is a need to make the children feel they want to stay in the village, with more activities and facilities provided, making the village a better place to be. AM would like to gain greater understanding of how the village is run and have the opportunity to be involved in the voluntary work of the PC as she is currently not in full time employment.

GG thanks AM and invites Jason Morgan to address the PC.

Mr Jason Morgan (JM) has lived in the village for almost 12 months with his wife and four children. JM grew up in East Lyng and attended North Curry Primary School. JM was a Special Constable for 10 years and is aware of local community issues. In the last 12 months JM has been impressed with projects such as the HOTV and life within the village.

JM states he is proactive, honest, respectful, and helpful.

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

PH enquires what JM's current occupation is.

*For the purpose of the candidate's privacy this will not be published in the public minutes. The question was not relevant to the other candidates who had stated their current employment status.*

SS enquires what is their top priority for the Parish Council and Village.

KA responds to not let one faction dominate others.

AM responds the welfare and facilities of the younger generation in the village

JM responds fairly distributing CIL funding, diversity, that all age groups are supported for a robust future for all.

GG asks if there are anymore questions for the candidates. There were none.

A member of the public asks if there is a restriction on the number of Parish Councillors or whether all applicants who are willing to serve the community could be considered.

GG responds that only 9 Parish Councillors are permitted.

GG expresses the gratitude of the PC to all the applicants, citing it is a tremendous statement to volunteer for the role and don't lose heart if not co-opted this evening - they should consider standing again in the PC elections in 2023.

GG asks if the PC wish to discuss the attributes of each candidate. The PC agree to this and resolve to ask the members of the public to leave the meeting room.

*All members of the public leave the meeting room whilst the PC discuss the candidates' attributes.  
(7 members of the public leave)*

*The Clerk welcomes the public back into the meeting.*

SS nominates all three candidates, PH seconds, all were in favour.

*Each Parish Councillor votes via a ballot paper provided by the Clerk. The Clerk collects votes from a social distance.*

The Clerk informs that Anne Merritt has been co-opted onto the PC by an overall majority and presents the Declaration of acceptance of office and register of interest forms to AM.

GG thanks all three candidates and asks AM to join the meeting.

## **72. CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy**

GG states the current plan is for the community to decide the allocation of the CIL money to projects, rather than the PC.

GG asks the Clerk for an update on all expressions of interest for CIL funding to date.

The Clerk reports that so far, the expressions of interest that have been received are as follows:

1. The Willowset – purchase and build of a modular building with associated works - £61,467.24
2. HOTV – contribution to the cost of re-equipping the kitchen in The Royal Oak - £10,000
3. Women's Institute – building a petanque court at the Village Hall - £2,000
4. Member of the Public – play area at Polkesfield – no costings submitted
5. Member of the Public – safe access from the village centre to Coates Visitor Centre – no costings submitted
6. SSG Tennis Club – tennis court floodlighting - £30,000
7. SSG Tennis Club – tennis court fencing - £6,600
8. Member of the Public – investment in children and young people that are the future of stoke / a safer environment for the Village – no costings submitted
9. Stoke Environment Group – creating a sustainable and environmentally conscious Stoke St Gregory - £2,500

GG reports that The Willowset is a 'special case' and there is an obvious urgency, with a pressing need for extra facilities, but it is for the community to decide – not the PC.

GG reports that following on from a meeting between several Parish Councillors and The Willowset, the Somerset Enterprise Fund could be a potential funding source and this option should be explored. JP reports the meeting with The Willowset was productive, it was a good opportunity to view the setting and further understand the setting's requirements for additional facilities.

SS agrees the meeting with The Willowset was productive and SS was surprised at the limited space the setting currently operates.

SS suggests that if The Willowset expanded at this opportunity there would be little scope for further expansion on the current site and questions the period of time that the current location may be viable before needing to consider moving to larger premises within the village.

GG reports that SD and SS have compiled a questionnaire for circulation to every member of the community. The PC can use the responses to gauge the community's priorities and desires regarding the allocation of the CIL funds.

*The questionnaire will be circulated to each household in the coming weeks.*

SS informs it is not a vote on current expressions of interest, but a way for the PC to gain a better level of understanding around the community's priorities.

SD requests thoughts from the PC on the best way to distribute the questionnaire to the community citing the importance that all voices are heard, including the younger population – the investment on infrastructure within the village should be for everyone.

GG responds it could be distributed with the newsletter. Completed forms could be collected at the village shop and/or Royal Oak.

The Clerk suggests residents should add their names to the completed questionnaire to avoid duplication of submissions.

AM asks what will happen if there a low response rate.

SS responds that when the HOTV questionnaire was distributed, it included names on the submissions and had a 40% response rate from the community. SS continues that people in the community care and know what's important to them with SS predicting a good response rate. SS requests the questionnaire is distributed sooner rather than later given the urgency of some expressions of interests such as The Willowset.

GG suggests speaking to Neil Morgan to arrange a distribution using the network used for the distribution of the Stoke News.

**GG to contact Neil Morgan to explore the option of distribution prior to the circulation of the Autumn newsletter.**

A member of the public asks if the community will have an idea of the framework/formula or format the PC will be adhering to in advance of the questionnaire's publication.

GG responds there is no framework or structure at this stage as it is important to attain the true thoughts of the community.

The member of the community asks what will be the next stage?

GG informs that responses will be collected and published in a non-discriminatory format and for clarity guidance notes will accompany the survey.

GG informs that applications to the PC for grants are not constrained by CIL. If other projects arise in the future that are eligible for applying for external grant funding – GG cites the HOTV as an example - then applications to these funding sources could also be made.

**SD to prepare the questionnaire prior to publishing on village website.**

### **73. Road Traffic and Parking in the Square**

SS reports that recently there was a van fire on the Willey Road and due to a parked car, the Fire Brigade were unable to access the fire hydrant at the front of the old bakery.

DF informs it is only illegal to obstruct a fire hydrant whilst the hydrant is required for firefighting. In the event of an emergency a fire officer is empowered to move a car, for example by breaking a window and releasing the handbrake.

SS recommends the situation is a watch in brief and taken off the agenda until September when the school year starts and there is more traffic and parking within the centre of the village.

**Clerk to remove the item from the agenda until September.**

#### **74. Phone Box at the Playing Fields**

GG reports that the phone box refurbishment is now well underway. GG continues the cost to clean the phone box and replace broken panes of glass and rivets will be approximately £200. The labour being done on a voluntary basis.

SS enquires as to the phone box's proposed purpose. GG responds that Karen Housego is currently spearheading the project and nothing, as yet, is set in stone.

SS proposes £200 is ringfenced for the refurbishment of the phone box. PH seconds the motion, all were in favour.

#### **75. Request for a dog waste bin on Woodhill**

The Clerk reports that she has contacted SWT to obtain a quote for purchase, installation, and emptying of a dog waste bin at Woodhill.

The purchase of the bin is £345 + VAT = £414.00

Annual cost of emptying the bin (twice weekly visits) £1,291.78 + VAT = £1,550.14

Total Bin installation and emptying £1,636.78 + VAT = £1,964.14

GG suggests that the 2021-22 budget could not absorb this expense and recommends re-visiting the proposal once the 2022-23 budget and precept is discussed later this year.

PH stated it is a huge cost for a minority of people.

SS reports there have already been several campaigns to encourage people to pick up after their dog and take it home with them, sadly people continue to leave dog mess and suggests this is further exasperated by the growing numbers of dogs within in the village.

**Clerk to consider costings into 2022-23 budget**

#### **76. Relocation of the bin at Woodhill**

PH informs that the current location of the bin at Woodhill was also the site of the old phone box and bus stop. PH recommends that the bin is relocated to the bus stop at the junction of Woodhill Terrace and Dark Lane. PH asks if the bin is still emptied by SWT.

SD responds the bin is emptied regularly but is filled with domestic waste soon after.

**Clerk to contact SWT with regards to the relocation of the bin. Clerk to contact SEG to confirm relocation site.**

#### **77. Covid 19**

DF reports that cases in the SWT district have fell from 306 – 290 with 1 case in ICU at Musgrove hospital.

DF continues that vaccination rates are successful with 87% of the Somerset population having received their first dose and 72% their second.

DF informs that vaccination rates amongst the 18-30 age group are dipping and there are now reports of some wastage of vaccinations due to the slowdown.

DF reports that the “pinging” is impacting on local service such as refuse and recycling collections, but this should improve after 16<sup>th</sup> August when certain workforce sectors will be required to have a PCR test rather than isolate.

GG reports that since restrictions were lifted on 19<sup>th</sup> July, it is reassuring to see that most people are still being sensible by social distancing and wearing masks to stop the spread of the virus.

#### **78. Willey Road Housing Development**

SS reports that there could be some delays on the deadline for completion due to the nationwide issue with supplying building materials.

GG informs that there will be a Willowtree social housing open day on 18<sup>th</sup> August at 3pm.

**GG to circulate information on the Willowtree event**

## **79. Highways Speedwatch**

Nothing to report

### **Speed Limit in Meare Green**

The Clerk reports that once again, the Traffic Management Officer (TMO) has not had the opportunity to visit the site due to a backlog of works. With the TMO now on leave for 2 weeks, the works order will still not be submitted before the August PC meeting.

GG states that given the initial proactive engagement with SCC, there is now a feeling of frustration that we are still waiting for the survey that will permit a formal proposal being prepared. GG continues that a delay of this magnitude undermines the credibility of all involved in the eyes of those parishioners who were advocates of this change.

DF agrees to contact the TMO to investigate the delays on behalf of the PC.

## **80. Footpaths**

### **Footpath T25/27 and update from the Footpath Officer deferred due to Footpath Officer not being present**

#### **East Side Footpath on the Willey Road**

GG reports that he has contacted the landowner with regards to the possible creation of a new footpath on the field side of the hedge, but the landowner's intention was to allow for road widening by moving the hedge to install a footpath, citing having it on the other side of the hedge would be counterproductive.

SS suggests that users would feel safer using the footpath after dark if it were created on the road side of the hedge.

## **81. Climate / Environmental Issues**

JP reports the Stoke Environment group (SEG) held a productive meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 where they agreed the working group's five main objectives and its mission statement. The group has approximately 50 members and is always looking for volunteers.

JP continues that the SEG has submitted an expression of interest for CIL funding as a kick-starter from the PC.

JP informs there is a hedgehog watch survey currently being co-ordinated by a member and a booklet on how to reduce domestic waste is also being compiled.

It is planned that the SEG will hold a community open day on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

GG reports that the SEG is a viable group of 50+ members with no current source of funding, and immediate costs are being incurred. At present the Village Hall has offered free use of the space for SEG meetings.

GG proposes that the PC allocate £500 of Section 137 money to the SEG to act as seed funding and support the implementation of planned activities.

SS informs that the SEG must devise a constitution and to start this process she suggests the SEG use the Allotment Association as a model.

**Clerk to add item to the next agenda**

*Agendas, Minutes and further information for the Stoke Environment Group are available to view on the village website.*

## **82. Floods**

Nothing to report

## **83. Playing Fields**

SS reports the official opening of the pavilion will take place on 21<sup>st</sup> August with cricketer Marcus Trescothick formally opening the Dennis Silk Pavilion.

SS continues that the old pavilion has almost been removed, and there is plenty of hardcore that needs to be recycled. It is a slow process due to the lack of volunteers available to remove the hardcore.

Local cricket is proving a success with 2 football teams and 2 fitness clubs also using the facilities.

*If you are able to assist with the removal and recycling of the hardcore, please contact Neil Sollis – Chairman of the Playing Fields.*

#### **84. Heart of the Village**

Nothing to report

#### **85. Village Website**

##### **Appointment of a website administrator and approval of retainer fee**

GG reports a member of the community, Bob Cervi, (BC) has expressed an interest in supporting Nick Sloan with the website.

GG continues that BC has an impressive background with Reuters, shows enthusiasm and is competent in using WordPress CMS.

GG estimates that the monthly work required would be 10 hours and recommends a retainer of £100 for invoicing.

SS requests that the PC meet with BC at the next meeting.

**GG to invite BC to the next meeting**

**Clerk to add the item to the next agenda**

A member of the public asks who will be responsible for the content uploaded to the website.

GG responds that BC could present suggestions, but input is valuable from local groups to keep the site relevant.

#### **86. Broadband**

SB reports that Airband connecting Devon and Somerset will be rolling out in Ruishton and Thornfalcon later this year with plans for a roll out in SSG in Q2 of 2022.

GG responds it could be promising and the PC will wait for further information from the providers.

#### **87. Consultations and Surveys**

##### **SWTC Notice of further consultation on Districtwide design guide and Taunton Garden town public realm guide draft supplementary documents**

GG informs that this is a great piece of work, and the PC has nothing to add to it

GG queries what will happen to this project once the Unitarian Authority is in place, stating that with the amount of work, complexity and strategy involved, it would be a great shame if it were not to happen.

SB responds that she does not know what will happen to this project under the Unitary Authority expressing the work has taken years to produce and hopes it as not been a waste of money.

*DF and two members of the public leave*

#### **88. Financial Matters**

##### **Standing Order**

K de Silva – Clerk’s Salary £377.00

##### **Payments for Authorisation**

Josh Williams – Sunrise Horticultural Services – Strim and Mow £90.00

G Wagen and James – Strim and mow burial ground – May £36.00

G Wagen and James – Strim and mow burial ground – June £108.00

Rockwell Print and Sign – Summer Newsletter £69.00

K de Silva – Clerks expenses – Secure postage of documents, envelopes and stamps £23.07

Farming Community Network – Donation in lieu of internal auditor fee £50.00

G Gleed – Reimbursement for the Allotment Association Insurance £165.18

SSG Playing Fields – Insurance for the new pavilion £670.97

N Sloan – Reimbursement for Website Plug in £15.17

##### **Payments Received**

Crescent Funeral Services (Venn) £300.00

SCC Climate Emergency Grant for HOTV £5,000.00



GG reports that the Playing Fields insurance for the new pavilion is the only out of the ordinary payment on the schedule.

SS reports that in previous years, the insurance payment only covered Public Liability Insurance as the old pavilion could not be covered due to its state of repair. With the new pavilion at a cost of approximately £300,000 it requires its own insurance policy.

GG reports that the Playing Fields' outgoings are considerably more than its income and long term the situation is not sustainable. GG continues that legislation requires installation of a heat pump at a cost of £120 per month. Electricity costs are £120 per month as there are also grass maintenance fees. GG recommends that the financial issues of the Playing Fields are addressed.

PH states that the PC should pay the insurance for the pavilion which is an asset for the whole community.

PH proposes all payments are made, SS seconds the motion, GG abstained from voting, all were in favour.

### **Other Financial Items**

The Clerk reports that the first instalment of the SCC Climate Emergency Fund grant for the Solar panels at The Royal Oak of £5,000 was received into the PC account and has duly been transferred to the HOTV account. The Clerk continues that the remaining £10,000 has now been received and requests this is transferred to the HOTV account along with the above payments to be made. All agree.

The Clerk informs that the cheque for the RABI donation (Min 54) for £200 requires signing, but as no signatories are present at the meeting this will be deferred until the next meeting.

GG requests that Simon Dauncey is also made a signatory for the PC account

**Clerk to arrange a change of mandate to include SD as a signatory.**

Monthly bank reconciliation was completed by SS with no issues to report

The PC quarterly Accounts were circulated to the PC (20-07-21) GG thanked the Clerk for the in-depth reporting and no issues were reported.

### **89. Other Items for discussion**

#### **Confidential Item (E11-06-21)**

GG requests the 3 remaining members of the public leave the meeting.

The Minutes of the confidential item will not be published in the minutes due to GDPR regulations

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.40pm.

**The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the main hall at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August at 7.30pm.**

**Face Masks and Social Distancing are advised.**

**Please email any items for the agenda to the clerk ([ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)) or the Chairman ([grahiamgleed@gmail.com](mailto:grahiamgleed@gmail.com)) by Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021.**