

## STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

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

**Present** – Graham Glead (Chairman), Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair), Janice Pearce, Ann Finn, Anne Merritt, John Hembrow, Peter House, Simon Dauncey, David Fothergill (County Councillor)

**In Attendance** – Kelly de Silva (Clerk), Ian Upshall (IU) (SEG)

**109. Apologies for absence** – Heather Venn, Charlotte Sundquist (Footpath Officer), Sue Buller (District Councillor), Barrie Hall (District Councillor), David Fothergill (County Councillor) will arrive later

**Minutes of the previous meeting** – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021 were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman.

**Declarations of Interests and Dispensations** – None

**Public Question Time** – IU would like to raise an anomaly with the August minutes stating he did not wish to imply suggesting a 20mph as the minutes implied.

IU reports the Stoke Environment Group (SEG) has recently had a corporate survey completed by Plantlife. The survey included ideas for maximising the benefits of the Coppice (area of trees planted in front of the village hall).

IU continues to inform that discussions are being held with Village Hall Trustees regarding the planting of the hedge. This will be weather dependant, with some weed removal planned for the coming week. IU expresses thanks to Phil Stone for the donation of supplies and the SEG will keep the PC informed with planned dates for the hedge planting.

IU also expresses gratitude to the PC for allowing access to the Parish online tool that the SEG plan to use for logging and plotting information and also for the previously agreed PC seed funding for the group of £500 (Min 100 08-21).

IU reports that SEG is in the process of setting up a bank account and will inform the Clerk once this has been approved. IU states that it is the intention of the group to be self-sustaining and there has been positive results from building a database of grants that can be applied for and funding actions that can be accessed.

SS informs Wessex Water have opened a Community Fund today (13-09-21) for grants of up to £3000 to support charitable and community activities which aim to improve the lives of local people. *For more information on the Wessex Water community fund and how to apply please visit the website at: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/funding>*

### 110. Planning

**36/21/0024/CQ Holly Farm House, 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

DECISION – PRIOR APPROVAL REFUSAL 17-08-21

*(please note on the agenda just was written as conditional approval. This was due to a clerical error on the SWT planning portal at the time of writing that has since been amended.)*

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

DEISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 18-08-21

**36/21/0022 The Coal Yard. Woodhill, 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

DECISION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 16-08-21

**36/21/0027 The Wagon House. Meare Green, Stoke Road, Stoke St Gregory** – Erection of a workshop/feedstore (retrospective)

Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agreed the following response:

*“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council have no objection to this planning application.”*

### **111. Opening up safely and re-connecting communities fund submissions and application**

GG reports that 6 applications were received from local groups to apply for the SCC ‘opening-up safely and re-connecting communities fund’ which is being allocated and distributed by SALC (Somerset Association of Local Councils). The first round of which is capped at £1,500 per application per council, and this will be followed by a subsequent round of application where the cap rises to £5,000 per council.

The first-round submissions to the fund were as follows:

- SSG Church Rooms (registered charity number 310206) - £250
- SSG Scout Group - £400.00
- Stoke Environment Group (SEG) - £500
- SSG Tennis Club - £500
- SSG Baptist Church - £500
- The Willowset - £5,000

GG proposes - as The Willowset’s application totals £5,000 which is above the cap set for the first round - its application is included in round two of the application process. AM seconds the motion; all were in favour.

GG enquires how would be the best way to distribute the £1,500 (part 1) of the application between the remaining 5 submissions. GG asks if this should be done using pro rata figures or should the subjective judgement of the PC be used.

AM suggests that the £1,500 is distributed equally between the groups that have requested funding.

PH asks if this would be the best option as the Church Room are requesting less than an evenly distributed figure.

SS expresses keenness to offer help to groups who do not usually apply for grants or financial assistance from the PC.

AM recommends that all those who applied are worthy groups within our community with projects that would benefit the wider community.

AM proposes the application is submitted with the first tranche of £1,500 being split equally over the 5 groups at £300 each with the 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche for funding up to £5,000 being submitted for The Willowset. SS seconds the motion; all were in favour.

**Clerk to complete the SALC application form and send to the SALC CEO with the original submission requests from each group.**

### **112. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)**

SD reports that since the CIL survey was distributed with the Stoke News there has been a very poor response rate, which is very disappointing.

SD continues that to date there has only been 25 responses.

SS states that after a considerable amount of debate at previous meetings with members of the public regarding CIL spend, such a poor initial response rate is unexpected and extremely disappointing, SS stresses how this is a very important exercise to establish the needs of the community, with this amount of investment unlikely to happen again in the foreseeable future.

GG responds that the PC do not wish for the decisions around how best to allocate the CIL funding to be left to the PC’s subjectivity and that more responses needed to effectively assess the community’s needs.

**All households within the village should have now received a CIL questionnaire. If you have not received one they can be obtained from the Community Shop, via the website**

**<https://www.stokestgregory.org/cil-questionnaire/> or from the Clerk [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk) 07701 053903.**

**Completed questionnaires can be dropped off at Stanmoor Garage, The Lemon Tree, The Village shop, and pub or can be scanned and emailed to [cilqssg@gmail.com](mailto:cilqssg@gmail.com). If you can not return your questionnaire by any of these methods call Simon Dauncey on 07939 076327 who will arrange for collection of the questionnaire from your home. The deadline for completed surveys is 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Please make your voice count.**

### **113. Road Traffic and parking in the Square and around the centre of the village.**

SS reports that there have been some significant issues with parking at the shop causing problems for road traffic and pedestrians. SS explains that all too often people park in the bay directly in front of the gate instead of using the car park with very few of these people genuinely requiring the immediate access this bay provides.

SS continues that this issue is presenting itself as an accident waiting to happen, forcing pedestrians to walk into oncoming traffic when the parked vehicles should use the car park unless the occupants have mobility problems and require shorter, easier access to the shop.

GG informs that the long-term plan will be to have the kerb dropped and have this area designated as a blue badge and loading only bay. GG asks if there would be support for the PC to consider submitting a planning application on behalf of the HOTV for this action to happen sooner. All are supportive of this suggestion.

AM notes that too many residents in the village may not need to drive for the school run and do not use the extra parking provided at The Royal Oak, Playing Fields, Village Hall, or Church car park, instead many opt to park in the square, Willey Road or at the top of Huntham Lane thus causing traffic problems.

GG asks the PC what can be done to solve this problem.

JH responds that although personally irritated at times with careless parking, it does act as a natural speed calming measure, stating if these cars were not parked there, the through traffic speed could potentially increase by another 10 mph. JH suggests a good start would be to encourage shop users to use the car park.

PH asks if better pedestrian routes could be explored. AF responds the large plant pots outside the pub inhibit use of the path if cars are parked directly outside.

AM suggests the PC contacts the school with regards to staff and parent parking.

**GG to write to the Head Teacher to politely remind staff and parents to park sensibly and preferably in one of the designated car parks within the village.**

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

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

The Clerk reports that Karen Housego (KH) has agreed to order the paint and one glass panel week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021 and will contact another volunteer to assist with the works before the weather deteriorates. The Clerk informs that KH is aware of the £200 funds earmarked by the PC (Min74 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021) to cover the cost of the renovation supplies.

### **115. Unitarian Authority**

GG informs that there is little to say on this matter at present as no County Councillor or District Councillor are present, but it should be left on the agenda as The Local Government Reorganisation Programme (LGA) starts to roll out. GG reports that the Chair and Clerk are due to attend a conference on the LGA on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### **116. Covid 19**

As County Councillor David Fothergill will be joining later in the meeting this item is deferred with GG citing the statistics released in the press say it all and with active case numbers still high in the South-West precautions should still be taken.

### **117. Willey Road Housing Development**

GG reports that there is still an ongoing issue with the fence on the North side of the development. The SWT Planning Officer supports a post and rail fence despite the PC and residents requesting a close-board fence to provide the residents with greater security, safety, and privacy at their properties.

GG informs he has written to the Case Officer as Chairman of the PC (not on behalf of the PC) to ask why the close board fence should not be considered - stating the optimum solution should be addressed at the start rather than further down the line. SS adds that no decision on the re-submitted planning application (36/21/0015) despite the deadline expiring for a decision on 27-08-21.

## **118. Highways**

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

The Clerk informs that this project was first initiated with SCC Highways in September 2020 when the radar was installed at Meare Green. The Clerk continues that DF had previously informed the PC that delays in progressing with the project had been due engineers being redeployed to complete the 20mph school zones project ahead of the start of the Autumn school term.

The clerk informs that she has written to the TMO at SCC Highways stating that although the PC are sympathetic to the constraints the pandemic has imposed on working practices and the importance of implementing the school zones project, a delay of 12 months undermines the credibility of all involved in the eyes of the Parishioners who were advocates of the speed limit reduction. The Clerk has requested the project is given priority such that we are not faced with more embarrassment caused by further delays.

No response to the Clerk's communication has been received due to the TMO being on annual leave.

### **Speed watch**

Nothing to report.

### **Speed Limit on Dark Lane, Huntham Lane and Slough Lane**

GG invites IU to talk about the speed limit signage.

IU informs that the current speed limit signs and national speed limit signage located around the centre of the village are oddly positioned. IU suggests relocation and better signage may be something worth considering as the village grows in the future.

SS suggests that the lanes in question have a natural road speed citing excessive speeds in the lanes would be unsafe and dangerous to even try.

JH advises that further signage around Woodhill and Slough Lane could very quickly be consumed by hedge growth and questions if more signs on narrow lanes would be an answer.

PH informs that Woodhill is considered as a separate settlement to the main village, with Woodhill having a far higher density of housing allowing for a speed limit in comparison to Slough Lane on the other side of the village.

GG asks the PC if an advisory body should be developed for highways and speed limits within the village.

JH recommends the speed limit reduction in Meare Green should be completed first before consideration to broader areas is considered.

AM enquires about hedge trimming asking what the PC's stance is on this. GG responds that SCC Highways are responsible from the highway to the verge with homeowners being responsible for the verge to the property.

PH states that there are several locations within the village where hedges are overgrowing, informing the hedge by the sewage works as an example of where the hedge is overgrowing at a higher-level meaning traffic (especially large vehicles such as tractors and lorries) are required to take the corner wide into oncoming traffic where there has previously been an incident reported. PH suggests that there would need to be a major renovation of hedges by SCC highways in the area.

AM states that too many hedges and verges are encroaching onto narrow roads within the village.

GG asks if the PC have an obligation to ask homeowners to cut back hedges that are encroaching onto the village roads and lanes.

SS responds that this is an action that Burrowbridge PC took.

*(DF Joins the meeting)*

GG suggests an article in the next newsletter reminding homeowners of their responsibility to keep highways and footpaths clear of obstructions from overgrown hedges and verges. All agree.

**GG to draft an article for circulation prior to the next newsletter on maintaining hedges from obstructing highways and public pathways.**

### **30 mph speed limit sign on Griggs Hill**

The Clerk asks for the exact location of this sign mentioned at the August PC meeting so they can request it is cleared as part of the final mow/trimming of the season by Sunrise Horticultural Services.

IU agrees to inform the Clerk of the location.

### **119. Footpaths**

#### **Update from the Footpath Officer**

In the absence of the Footpath Officer there is no update.

#### **Update on Footpath T25/27 and T25/15**

GG reports that T25/27 is currently a permissive path, and T25/15 has a stairway that is deemed very unsafe. GG continues that he circulated two proposed communications to the landowners and asks if the PC wish to send these to the planned recipients.

JH informs that footpath T25/27 is a permissive path due to the definitive path being positioned directly through a barn. DF informs this error was due to a clerical error by the PC Clerk in 1946.

AF reports that in 2020 an enforcement order was requested for footpath T25/27, but it was not applicable due to the footpath being permissive. AF continues that a Section 30 agreement between the landowner and the PC could be considered to make the footpath definitive.

IU reports that the footpath officer is currently holding talks with the landowner daily as part of her work with the SEG and would be aware of current issues.

**Clerk to add the item to the next agenda to include an update on discussions between the Footpath Officer and landowner.**

AF reports that she has reported the concern over the safety issues of the steps on T25/15 to George Montague (SCC) and via the ROAM Somerset site. AF was informed that a “volunteer” had assisted to rectify the issue, but it was still deemed a hazard.

GG requests the email exchange between AF and SCC Rights of Way is circulated to the PC.

**AF to circulate email exchange with SCC Rights of Way.**

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

### **120. Climate / Environmental Issues**

JP reports that the SEG will hold an Envirofair on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October from 10am – 4pm at The Williams Hall. This will include contributions from various local groups including the school, Climate Action Athelney, Somerset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Somerset Beekeepers, SWP, The Parish Church, Gregory Players, Tennis Club, Brownies and the Willowset. JP continues that the upcoming SEG meeting will finalise the plans and all are welcome.

JP states the fair will raise awareness of the group and its objectives and with over 60 members at present it is hoped a target of 100 members will be reached by Christmas.

JP informs that the footpath group are making good progress, with Sarah Evans being instrumental in forming good working relationships with local landowners.

GG commends the work of the SEG stating success breeds success and the PC should promote the good work being done by the SEG.

GG states it is positive to see other village groups working with the SEG and will assist in promoting these relationships of working together.

JP states the importance of changing people’s concepts in that everyone can have some small impact for the greater good of the environment.

### **121. Floods**

Nothing to report.

### **122. Playing Field**

SS reports that the grand opening of the Dennis Silk pavilion was a huge success with lots of village groups benefiting from the event. SS continues that it was great to see the community out and enjoying themselves.

SS informs that the cricket season has now ended with the SSG team narrowly missing out on promotion and the football season is about to commence.

### **123. Heart of the Village**

GG reports that the HOTV Annual Members Meeting will be held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September.

### **124. Village Website**

GG reports the newly appointed web administrator contractor Bob Cervis is due to start work on the website assisting Nick Sloan from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

### **125. Broadband**

The Clerk reports that agreeing a date with Airband broadband to attend a PC meeting has been difficult and has proposed that Airband attend the PC meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

### **126. Consultations and Surveys**

#### **Future Parish Elections response to SALC**

GG reports that SALC wish to know the views of the PC regarding whether the 2023 Town and Parish Elections should be moved forward to 2022 so that Towns and Parishes can remain in sync with principal authority elections moving forward to limit a possible significant increase in contested election costs especially for smaller parishes with limited resources.

GG proposes responding to agree with the proposed moving forward one year of the elections to remain in sync with the principal authority. JH seconds the motion; all were in favour.

### **116. Covid 19 (Report from DF deferred from earlier in the meeting)**

DF reports that in the last 5 weeks, Somerset has seen 25% of all positive infections of the virus over the last 18 months with all districts recording high figures.

DF continues that 85% of the Somerset population have now been double vaccinated, with a government announcement imminent for over 50's to have a booster jab after 6 months since receiving their second dose.

The vaccination centre at Taunton Racecourse will be relocating to Firepool – this is expected to happen in the beginning of October 2021.

### **127. Financial Matters**

#### **Standing Order**

01-09-21 K de Silva – Clerks Salary £377.00

#### **Payments for authorisation**

J Williams - Sunrise Horticultural Services - Mow and Strim £90.00

G Wagen and James - Strim, mow, dispose of cuttings burial ground July £72.00

SLCC Annual Subscription £95.00

SALC Councillor Essentials remote training 23/06/21 £25.00

PKF Littlejohn Limited Assurance review of AGAR £360.00

#### **Payments Received**

N Hector - Sponsorship of the Autumn Stoke Newsletter £69.00

GG proposes all payments are made; SS seconds the motion; all were in favour.

### **Other Financial Items**

#### **Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2021 Notice of conclusion of audit.**

The Clerk informs that the external auditor report and certificate for 2020-21 has been returned citing that based on their review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) in their opinion the information provided is in accordance with Proper Practices and no matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The Clerk proposes publishing the Notice of conclusion of audit with elector inspection rights being able to be exercised from Monday – Thursday 10am-2pm at the Clerks home residence, with copies provided on request from any electorate at a cost of £5 each.

GG thanks the Clerk for the work involved in maintaining and delivering this extensive piece of work.  
**Clerk to publish AGAR certificate and notice on the website.**

## **128. Other Items for Discussion**

### **Review of meetings in the Main Hall**

GG reports that as the season changes there is a conflict in use of the Main Hall with the Beavers/Scouts. GG asks if the PC wish to return to meetings in the meeting room.

The Clerk expresses concern about returning to a smaller space where social distancing could be an issue as she has a young family with school aged children and as such, cannot guarantee being exposed to the virus.

JP also expresses reservations about returning to a smaller space such as the meeting room.

SS states that she does not want to turn the Scouts away, but she too is reticent about moving meetings back to the meeting room.

PH asks what other days available and what options can be considered.

**GG to discuss options available to accommodate both groups.**

DF reports that with the situation in Afghanistan SCC has been assisting with the relocation of some Afghan Refugees which are predominantly interpreters / translators and their families. DF continues that relocation of the refugees is generally happening in larger towns that have the infrastructure and significant number of private housing available as not to impact the social housing demand and systems.

**The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the main hall at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 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 Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.**