

## **STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

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

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

**In Attendance** – Kelly de Silva (Clerk),

**177. Apologies for absence** – Heather Venn, Simon Dauncey, Sue Buller (District Councillor), Barrie Hall (District Councillor) David Fothergill will arrive at 8pm

**Record acceptance of apologies for long-term absence due to Coronavirus** – Although absences are recorded and accepted at each monthly PC meeting in accordance with Section 85 (1) of The Local Government Act 1972, Stoke St Gregory Parish Council officially record that the PC authorises Parish Councillor Heather Venn's long-term absence from Council meetings due to vulnerability/shielding due to the Coronavirus pandemic. GG proposed the motion; PH seconded; all were in favour.

**Minutes of the previous meeting** – The minutes of the Parish council meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Chairman. The December meeting was cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

**Declarations of Interests and Dispensations** – GG as Chair of the HOTV declares an interest in Minute 188 Stage 3 of the SALC re-opening communities fund as the HOTV are considering making an application to the fund through the PC.

**Review of dispensations granted** – A resolution was agreed on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019 (Min145.1) that the Council delegated the power to the Clerk to grant dispensations for 3 years from this date. The power rests with the relevant authority under Section 31 (4) of the Localism Act 2011 and the basis is set out under Section 33(2) of the Localism Act 2011.

The Clerk granted a dispensation for the written request form received from Parish Councillor Graham Glead under Section 31(4) of the Localism Act 2011 for Cllr. Glead.

- a) To participate or participate further in any discussions of the matter of the HOTV project at meetings
- b) To participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter of the HOTV

The dispensation was sought in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion and vote in an area of key importance to the future of the village. The period of the dispensation was granted for 12 months. It is agreed by all members present to annul the long-term dispensation and a declaration of interest must be declared prior to any discussion involving the HOTV project at a PC meeting with abstention of a vote on matters arising, as per the PC standing orders 7c unless a dispensation is sought, for Cllr. Glead and Cllr. Dauncey who are both on the HOTV committee.

**Public Question Time** – No members of the public were present

### **178. Planning**

**36/21/0031 Reeds Barn. Meare Green Court Lane, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory -**

Erection of a detached single storey garage to the front of the dwelling

DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 17-11-21

**36/21/0014 Brae Barn. Curload, Stoke St Gregory -** Erection of a first-floor extension to the rear, construction of a link sunroom, erection of a double bay car port and alterations to parking arrangements

APPLICATION WITHDRAWN 30-11-21

**36/21/0025 The Barn. The Willows, Curload, Stoke St Gregory** - Change of use of land with alterations to parking provisions, boundary treatments and outbuilding / carport

DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 09-12-21

**36/21/0012 The Pump House. Curload, Stoke St Gregory** - Erection of extension to summerhouse for use as welfare facilities for harvesting and Christmas tree farm on land

DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 17-12-2

**36/21/0032 9 Huntham Close, Stoke St Gregory** - Conversion of garage into ancillary accommodation and erection of a single-storey extension to the side for use as a garage /store (E17-11-21)

*In the absence of a December PC meeting due to the ongoing pandemic, SSG PC agreed electronically to support this application. The response was submitted to SWT under the powers delegated to the Clerk*

JP informs that the impact of local pop-up retailing on neighbours could be beginning to become an issue within the Parish.

**GG to check the arrangements and regulations**

### **179. Low-cost housing allocation policy**

GG informs that he believes the allocation of the social housing within the Broomfield Park development has been inconsistent.

GG explains the process used (Homefinder) - a generic tool which creates a file for the applicant and is then submitted to the relevant housing association who makes the decisions.

GG expresses thanks to Cllr Sue Buller for her actions in dealing with some of the inconsistencies but feels the PC - who have led the process of establishing the need for local affordable and social housing - should be allowed to comment on the allocation process. The PC has had no control which was disappointing given the purpose of the housing was to benefit people within the village or with links to the village.

SS responds that the process is based on a Choice Base letting system and bidders are assessed on their individual housing needs. SS continues that the PC should support local applications to social housing but has no right to influence the allocation of homes. It is done via privately owned companies who use well defined processes. SS explains the purpose of social housing is to protect vulnerable people citing everybody has the right to a home. Currently there is a housing shortage of around two million properties in England and the Broomfield Park allocation process highlights further need for social and affordable housing in the village.

AM informs there were 18 applicants for the social housing at Broomfield Park.

GG suggests the PC should be able to support local applicants by a structured process. SS responds that the allocation process is defined and delivered by professionals. SS informs the social housing white paper November 2020 - which reviews the allocation processes - has not been considered in Parliament yet, but that it could bring future process changes.

PH adds that as this particular housing association is based in Plymouth it seems the allocation process could be fairer because there is no personal knowledge about the applicants for the housing – it is just names on a file.

SS states that the best way for the PC to support social housing applicants is reduce the number of planning application approvals for extensions which only serve to make more houses in the area less affordable, and the PC should approve new affordable builds.

GG reports the bottom line is, no matter what the personal views of the PC – the housing has been allocated to local people that required it.

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

GG reports he has cross referenced the Expressions of Interests for CIL funding received against the survey and most are incorporated within the results published in the winter Stoke news. GG informs since the results were published, there has still been very little input or comments from residents of the village.

SS comments the results of the community survey revealed there was a strong desire to identify (and purchase) a plot of land that could be converted into a 'wild space' for the community. SS continues that the plot of land in Polkesfield would be unsuitable for rewilding, but this plot of land would lend itself for purchasing to build more social housing.

GG responds the community would like a piece of land similar to the North Curry Community Woodland, and it is a case of finding the appropriate piece of land.

**GG to communicate with the Simon Bale regarding the location of a suitable piece of land**

GG reports that the most popular outcome of the CIL survey was health and fitness – in particular, there was strong support for the provision of a multi-use games area (MUGA) area at the playing field that can be used by all age groups.

GG proposes the Playing Fields Management Committee are approached to develop a proposal for a MUGA including plans, impact, and costings. AF seconds the motion; all were in favour.

**GG to contact the PFMC regarding presenting a proposal.**

PH asks if the MUGA could be built anywhere else in the village. GG responds there is no other place other than the village hall but cites a lack of space, and it could also have a negative impact for events that are booked at the hall such as conferences and weddings.

*(David Fothergill joins the meeting)*

AF comments that Footpath improvement and Bridleways was in the top 3 areas the community wish to see CIL investment. AF reports a quote was obtained and circulated to remedy the hazardous steps on Footpath T25/15 at a cost of £1280+VAT£256 = £1536.00. AF enquires if CIL funding could be used for this.

SS and PH state they would like to visit and assess the location before making a decision on this investment.

GG responds this particular location (which is part of the popular East Deane way) is extremely hazardous – with metal spikes sticking out. One person has reported being injured after a fall at the location, with others reporting it as dangerous.

PH enquires if the repairs should be the responsibility of the landowner and not the PC. AF responds the droves are not owned and explains the boundaries of the landowners of the surrounding area.

DF agrees with AF, stating the landowner would be responsible to the line of the field with the drove – meaning the area in question could be “orphaned land”.

AF informs that if the PC or any other body pay for improvements on a Public Right of Way, then SCC can be approached for match funding of the project.

**Members of the PC to visit the site before the next visit – GG recommends exercising caution due to the hazards**

**AF to investigate the possibility of match funding from SCC to remedy the area**

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

### **181. Replacement bench at Polkesfield bus stop update**

The clerk reports Cllr. Buller visited the site 26-11-21. A SWT Council Officer has confirmed a replacement has been authorised by SWT. The replacement should consist of a heavy-duty composite material bench that should be provided shortly, once SWT had decided from which budget it should come.

**Clerk to contact SB for a further update on installation**

### **182. Queens Jubilee celebrations 02-06-22 – 05-06-22**

The Clerk informs that Paul Fielding and Amelia Holt have volunteered their services for the event. SS reports at the last Jubilee there were lots of events and it was a well-received and attended event for the village.

PH recalls for the last jubilee each village group/organisation such as the school, PFMC, VH etc. worked on their own singular events, and this seemed a very successful arrangement.

**GG to contact local groups/organisations to enquire if they would like to contribute an event for the weekend celebrations.**

GG informs a beacon was situated at Walkers Farm last time, and a suitable location for a beacon should be considered for this Jubilee.

*If you have a creative idea for an event or would like to contribute to an event for the Queen's Jubilee weekend celebrations please email the Clerk at [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk) or the Chair Graham Gleed at [grahiamgleed@gmail.com](mailto:grahiamgleed@gmail.com)*

### **183. Give Back at Christmas**

GG reports this initiative was a sterling success. AM reports the project was very overwhelming and heart-warming. A number of families benefited from the initiative. A local business anonymously donated £500, with a further £370 donated by members of the community. AM informs the function room at the Royal Oak was filled with food and toy donations. Families were given hampers, toys, and food vouchers with every child in the school also receiving a box of biscuits. AM explains that some families felt they could not accept the items, but it was never meant as charity – it was an initiative which brought the village together.

AM continues that some of the food vouchers were not used, and these will be used to provide each child with an easter egg at Easter.

AM informs that next time she would like to start the initiative earlier (September) and attempt to identify a broader age range of residents who could benefit from the project.

GG states the village owes gratitude to AM for all her hard work and expresses the thanks of the PC to the community for their kind donations and hopes next year will be inclusive of other generations.

### **184. Covid 19**

DF reports that today (10-01-22) has seen the highest rate of infections so far in the County since the start of the pandemic – it is literally everywhere.

DF continues that hospitals are very busy and experiencing staff absences due to the virus but are coping under the pressures. Vaccination rates in the County are 94% double vaccinated with 52% now having received their booster jabs.

### **185. Unitary Authority**

DF reports committees and planning are now in place. The elections take place on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. One Somerset council will be vested 10 months after the elections. DF reports the next Local Government Advisory Board Meeting will be held virtually on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022.

GG expresses concern over the implications for small Parishes like SSG. With the amalgamation of the voluntary sector of Parish Council's forming Local Community Networks there is concern it could result in volunteers within the sector becoming overwhelmed.

DF responds local services will be transferred to Parishes – if they desire to take them on. DF continues the idea is to invigorate communities, encouraging them to seize opportunities. DF highlights that PC's currently have little power or influence over these aspects.

SS states it may be wise to wait until after May's Parish, Town, and County elections to consider Local Community Networks and how to best proceed in the future.

### **186. Elections May 2022**

The Clerk reports very little information has been received regarding the May elections, but SALC are planning to hold training courses in March. GG reports the PC should receive more information in February.

### **187. Postal collection change from PM to AM.**

GG reports that post box collections are now made in SSG at 9.30am, with this apparently being the result of a Royal Mail Post Box Strategy revision. SS notes the amended collection times have not been publicised. GG states this is a shameful abdication of service for SSG. GG advises the post box in North Curry is a priority post box if the 9.30 am post box collection is missed.

**GG to include the changes as a news item on the website.**

### **188. Stage 3 of the SALC re-opening communities' fund**

GG reports SALC are releasing a further £100,000 for the opening up safely and reconnecting communities' fund. GG declares an interest in this item as the HOTV are considering making an application to the fund. The Clerk informs that several village groups have already benefited from a portion of the £1500 awarded during the first stage of applications. The Willowset was awarded £5000 in the second stage. SALC will be giving priority to those councils who did not submit a stage 2 application, but SALC may be able to consider further applications from those who have already received stage 2 funding should they have resources to spare.

*If you are part of a local organisation who could benefit from this fund, more information is available on the village website at <https://www.stokestgregory.org/stage-3-opening-up-grants-from-scc/>*

*Or by contacting the clerk via email at [ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk)*

*Applications must be submitted to the Clerk by 5pm Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022.*

### **189. Donation request from Taunton citizens Advice Bureau**

GG reports last year the PC made a donation of £150 to the Taunton and District CAB to assist in funding the services they provide. GG proposes a donation of £200 is made, PH seconds the motion; all were in favour

**Clerk to include the donation in the January payment schedule**

### **190. Young people; first steps**

GG reports discussions with the Community Youth Project (CYP) are to resume imminently. Interest needs to be built ahead of a meeting which is currently planned for February.

### **191. Heart of the Levels Community Network**

GG states this initiative was discussed during Minute 185 and reports that North Curry PC have voted against participating in the initiative. GG asks if SSG PC wish to participate. GG suggests it may be too early to commit to joining. SS responds the proposed Community Network area is vast and may result in SSG being a "small fish in a big pond."

GG informs the key reasons the network is proposing on why they should come together are each Parish and Town share the following;

- Locality – all are local to each other, know each other and are all rural in character
- Priorities – all have similar priorities – flooding, agriculture, planning tourism, transport links, education, rural community groups and adapting to climate change
- Balance – Promoting a balanced Local Community Network (LCN) with including some larger Parishes, with no dominant town/Parish – all would have a similar voice
- Centrality – All are in the middle of Somerset

It is agreed to keep a watch in brief as more information is distributed about Local Government Reorganisation and LCN's in the coming months.

### **192. Willey Road Housing development**

GG reports the hedge has been cut up to the field on the Willey Road, but it leaves a section uncut. GG recommends that residents contact Pattens for a quote so this can be done before the end of the hedge cutting window in February.

**GG to inform residents**

### **193. Highways**

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

The Clerk reports the TRO was advertised from 25-11-21 – 16-12-21 and the TMO received no objections. The TMO submitted the works order to the depot before Christmas but omitted a request for some hedge cutting that was needed. It is hoped this would be rectified week commencing 10-01-22. The TMO informs the depot aim to schedule the works during February, but this is weather dependant.

The Clerk has requested another update on the actual costs but is awaiting a reply. The village nameplate at the site will read – Stoke St Gregory – Please drive carefully.

### **Speedwatch**

Due to the weather, no speedwatch has taken place.

### **Cars parked on the junction of Willey Road and Griggs Hill**

GG reports several comments have been received regarding cars parked at the junction of Willey Road / Griggs Hill which could lead to a dangerous incident.

It is agreed for the PC to write an official letter requesting that cars are not parked in this area due to road safety.

*GG to draft a letter on behalf of the PC*

### **Concerns raised over the number of people walking/cycling after dark with no Hi-Viz**

SS reports concerns have been raised about the number of people walking in the lanes after dark without Hi-Viz clothing and children cycling with no lights – SS states this is an accident waiting to happen.

The PC agree to purchase some Hi-Viz vests that can be collected from the community shop/pub for members of the community to use to promote road safety within the village.

*Clerk to order Hi-Viz vests*

*GG to add an item to the website and newsletter promoting the availability of the Hi-Viz wear and road safety*

*The Hi-Viz vests will be available for use of members of the community in the coming days, please see the website for further details of the distribution once the PC receive delivery of them.*

### **194. Footpaths**

There is no update from the Footpaths Officer this evening

### **Update on the steps at Footpath T25/15**

This update was included in Minute 180

SS requests the quote from the PFMC for the steps from Broomfield Park to the Playing Fields is included on the next PC agenda

*GG to obtain and circulate the quote to the PC*

*Clerk to add the item to the next agenda*

### **195. Stoke Environment Group (SEG)**

#### **SEG Update**

JP informs that further to the progress report from Ian Upshall circulated 14-12-21, the SEG and PFMC have been working together to replace unhealthy trees in the playing fields with saplings provided through SWT's Free Trees initiative.

JP continues from 9am on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2022 there will be a community hedge planting activity taking place around the perimeter of the Village Hall.

JP reports plans are well underway for the 2022 Envirofair on 25<sup>th</sup> June with events to include more younger people.

JP suggests as the village's Jubilee event is likely to be very well-attended it is hoped the SEG might consider participation. JP continues some SEG members may be passionate to keep the activities solely on promoting environmental issues, but the Jubilee event would provide an opportunity for greater exposure for the SEG and encourage participation from a broader spectrum of the community. SS agrees if the environment group focuses solely on environment projects, then it will not generate interest more broadly in the community

GG responds the PC is more supportive of a more inclusive approach.

#### **The Green Charter**

The PC agree to defer this item until the next agenda due to time constraints at this meeting

*Clerk to add item to the next agenda*



## 196. Floods

The Clerk informs a resident had reported blocked drains and gullies to the PC on 31-12-21 on Stoke Road, Meare Green. The Clerk reported this immediately via the SCC highways website. No further issues have been reported since.

*If you are experiencing blocked gullies and drains resulting in road flooding near your premises this can be reported directly to SCC Highways by visiting <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-blocked-drain-on-the-road/> They endeavour to have an engineer visit the site within 3 working days.*

## 197. Playing Fields

SS reports the Stoke Stampede on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022 was extremely successful. 342 runners participated in the event, which is slightly lower than anticipated, but most non-runners were possibly due to Covid related issues. SS continues having the pavilion open on the Saturday for registration as well as registration on Sunday proved to be very popular. SS informs there has been a huge amount of positive feedback about the event with many commenting about how great the village and how wonderful the community's support is for the runners.

DF adds that as a spectator the event was well organised with a brilliant atmosphere and great volunteers.

SS reports the PFMC AGM will be held in March with date and times to be confirmed.

## 198. Heart of the Village

Nothing to report

## 199. Village Website

Nothing to report

## 200. Broadband

The Clerk reports a new representative of Airband Broadband has been appointed and has suggested arranging a meeting in April to introduce Airband to the community of SSG. It is agreed this meeting should be held separate to the PC meeting.

**Clerk to arrange a date for the representative to attend SSG to hold a presentation and publicise in the newsletter and website once agreed**

## 201. Consultations and Surveys

No consultations

## 202. Financial Matters

### Standing Orders

01-12-21 K de Silva – Clerks Salary	£377.00
03-01-22 K de Silva - Clerks Salary	£377.00

### **Payments made from November's postponed meeting - authorised by the Clerk and signatories under delegated powers (Payments made 04-01-22)**

03-11-21 K de Silva - Clerks expenses - Stamps	£5.10
17-11-21 G Wagon and James - Strim/Mow Burial Ground	£36.00
30-11-21 G Wagon and James - Strim/Mow Burial Ground	£36.00
16-11-21 I Upshall - Reimbursement for Litter Picking equipment (Min.30)	£128.98
02-12-21 N Sloan - Website Administration	£120.00

### **Payments to be authorised**

09-12-21 Rockwell Sign and Print - Winter Newsletter	£69.00
01-01-21 K de Silva - Clerks Expenses Printer Ink & Paper	£28.30
01-01-21 Nick Sloan - Web Admin	£120.00

**Clerk to include CAB donation of £200 (min 189) and purchase of Hi-Viz equipment reimbursement to the Clerk of £38.87 (min.193) to the payment of schedule**

### Payments Received

01-11-21 SALC Grant for The Willowset (transferred 10-11-21 Min.175)	£5000.00
06-12-21 Willan SA SOBC - Sponsorship of the winter newsletter	£69.00

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

### Other financial items

Bank reconciliation not checked as payments for the cancelled December meeting will appear the January bank reconciliation.

Sign the British Legion cheque **AF to sign and obtain another signature and return cheque book to the Clerk**

Quarterly accounts (E10-01-22) **Clerk to add to the next meeting agenda**

Lloyds Banking – **AF agrees to call Lloyds as a signatory to update the mandate**

### 203. Other Items for discussion

Dates for 2022 PC meetings – The Clerk has booked the hall for the second Monday of each month. APM date to be confirmed at the next meeting

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

SS reports that Taunton town are changing bins to 1 part waste for incineration that includes dog waste and 1 part recycling. As a result, it would be unwise for the PC to consider the purchase of any further dog waste bins until there is a further update on the programme.

GG reports there Phil Stone has communicated the possibility of a meeting with farmers and North Curry PC to discuss tractor road safety. GG asks if the PC wish to participate.

It is agreed not to participate as there is little in the way of a positive outcome expected.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.27pm

**The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the main hall at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 14th February 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 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022**