

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 11th April 2022

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

Present – Sara Sollis (Vice-Chair – Chairman of the meeting), Janice Pearce, Peter House, Anne Merritt, Ann Finn, Simon Dauncey David Fothergill (County Councillor).

In Attendance – Kelly de Silva (Clerk), and 4 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence – Graham Gleed, Heather Venn, John Hembrow, Cllr Sue Buller, David Fothergill will arrive later

Minutes of the previous meeting – The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 14th March 2022 were agreed by all to be accurate and signed by the Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chairman.

Declarations of Interests and Dispensations – None received.

Public Question Time – A member of the public is present to highlight the issue of children cycling at speed along the footpath from Church Close to Broomfield Park. The member of the public raises concerns as the path is already inadequate for bicycles and with elderly people using the footpath; it is an accident waiting to happen. The member of the public asks if the PC is able to provide signage or a barrier to prevent inappropriate cycling along the path.

SS recommends the issue is added to the next meeting agenda for discussion.

Clerk to add the item to the next meeting agenda

Two members of the public are present for planning application 36/22/0004, one member is present to observe.

2. Planning

36/21/0027 The Wagon House. Stoke Road, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory -Erection of a workshop/feedstore on land

APPLICATION WITHDRAWN 24-03-2022

36/22/0004 Holly Cottage, Stoke Road, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory - Demolition of barn and erection of 1 No. single storey dwelling (In lieu of Class Q consent 36/21/0029CQ)

A member of the public wishes to speak. SS closes the meeting.

The member of the public wishes to inform the PC that planning application 36/22/0004 is for a retirement bungalow for the owner. They inform the PC that the current barn will be converted to a proposed single storey dwelling which will include many eco-friendly features with minimal impact for neighbouring properties. The applicants consider it appropriate to use a prior Class Q consent in lieu to realise their retirement goal.

SS re-opens the meeting and thanks the member of the public for their contribution.

The following response was unanimously agreed;

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

3. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

It is agreed this item is deferred until the new PC takes office in May.

4. Transfer of allotments

SS informs on behalf on GG that the PC nominated Solicitor and the developers' solicitor are in discussion regarding the transfer of the deeds for the allotments to the PC.

SS reports there has been a leak discovered within the development leading to a significant water charge which is currently being resolved

5. General Power of Competence / CiLCA

SS informs that the Clerk has now received confirmation that she has passed her CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) to become a qualified CiLCA Officer. SS congratulates the Clerk on achieving the qualification.

The Clerk informs from May 2022; the PC will be in a position to adopt the General Power of Competence (GPC) which allows local authorities a wider range of powers to deliver more for their communities. It is known as the power of “first resort.”

The Clerk explains the criteria for eligibility are;

- * A resolution must be passed by the PC to adopt GPC

- * At the time of passing the resolution at least two thirds are there by virtue of being declared elected

- * At the time of passing the resolution the Parish Clerk must hold a recognised professional qualification of CiLCA.

The Clerk advises the PC will meet this criteria as two-thirds stood for election, even though it was un-contested.

SS requests the Clerk circulate more information to the incoming term of PC members on the GPC.

Clerk to circulate information on GPC to the PC

6. Queens jubilee celebrations

SS reports on behalf of GG that so far planned events for the jubilee weekend include;

- Village Breakfast at the Village Hall on Friday morning
- Cream Tea at the Baptist Church on Saturday afternoon
- Joint songs of praise on the Playing Fields on Sunday morning
- Village Picnic on the Playing Fields on Sunday afternoon
- A craft beer festival at the Royal Oak (exact evening to be confirmed but it will probably be held on the Friday evening).

SS continues that GG has explored a couple of options of a village beacon but neither have as yet been successful. There has been no response from the School or The Willowset regarding any planned events.

SS states it is nice to see a weekend of planned events for the celebration for the village.

SS recommends requesting if GG will continue his work on the jubilee celebrations after his term in office as there is no committee or working group for this event.

SS to ask GG if he would be willing to continue supporting the planned celebrations

SS suggests a programme for the planned events may be a good idea. AM agrees to do this.

AM to devise a programme for the jubilee weekend for collection from the shop/pub.

SS asks if there is any update on the proposed tree planting (min 233).

IU responds he has spoken to re-imagining the levels who have assisted with the supplying the trees and hedge for the village hall and spinney. IU reports re-imagining the levels seem eager to supply the trees but a location for the planting and the number of trees required will need to be agreed. IU adds that the trees would not be able to be planted until September and would need to be planted in a public space.

IU suggests a Community wild space would be ideal; but acquiring the land will be an issue. SS agrees citing acquiring land could be a lengthy process and refers to the length of time it took to obtain the land for the allotments.

PH enquires if there would be sufficient space for planting at the playing fields. IU responds the Playing Fields is a finite area and it would depend on the type and number of trees that are required. There is some discussion on how the allocation of trees would include children that lived within the Parish boundary.

SS summarises;

- A brief should be published on the village website and social media to ascertain how many members of the community would be interested in planting a tree for their child (under 18) for the Queens Jubilee.

- Obtain an update from GG to ascertain if there is any land that could possibly be acquired for planting

- Options of areas that could be considered following further discussions include the Playing Fields, Polkesfield and along the path against the hedge of the allotments.

Clerk to write a brief for publication to gauge interest and number of trees required
SS to contact GG for an update on possible land that could be acquired
Clerk to add the item for further discussion to the next agenda

7. Unitary Authority / Local Government Reorganisation

In the absence of DF and in the interest of Purdah legislation, this item is deferred until the next meeting.

8. Elections May 2022

The Clerk reports the Parish Council elections for SSG were un-contested. The Clerk reports the newly nominated Parish Council that will take office commencing from the APCM on Monday 9th May will be;

Heather Venn, Ann Finn, John Hembrow, Peter House, Janice Pearce, Anne Merritt, Ian Upshall, and Jason Morgan.

Graham Gleed, Sara Sollis and Simon Dauncey will be standing down.

The co-option process for the ninth Parish Councillor will commence from the PC meeting on 11-05-22.

SS congratulates the members of the PC that will take office in May.

9. Young People; First Steps

SS reports that in March a consultation sponsored by the PC, was held with the young people of SSG to investigate ways which the young people of the village can be better supported. A summary and update of the outcomes of the meeting are available to view on the village website

<https://www.stokestgregory.org/young-peoples-meeting-feedback/>

SS requests a summary of the outcomes is posted on social media.

AM to post on social media

SS suggests that next steps should involve setting up a working group to establish the scope of the project and costings involved.

DF Joins the meeting, one member of the public leaves

AM reports a group of the children have expressed an interest in addressing the PC at a meeting to communicate their requests for the PC to consider.

AM expresses this is a project she is completely focused on citing the young people of the village need more to do as they currently have very little. AM informs a youth club is very hard to set up and maintain due to the regulations and safeguarding issues.

AM suggests a tuckshop over school holidays in the pavilion.

SS informs it was always an intention of the HOTV to have a Youth Café and indicates one option could be the PFMC and HOTV working together to provide a facility at different times of the year.

AM asks the PC for their views on the outcomes of the consultation. SS responds it is good to have had a consultation with the young people independent of anyone involved in the village. Although, there were no surprises. SS states it is now important to maintain traction moving this project forward. SS recommends a working group is set up requesting representatives from local groups including the PC, HOTV, PFMC to explore options to provide facilities and structured activities for the young people.

AM to contact local groups to initiate next steps for a working group

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

10. Annual Parish Meeting

The Clerk reports that due to the pre-election period of heightened sensitivity (Purdah) it was decided to postpone the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) until after the elections.

The Clerk informs the APM must be held before the 1st June and with limited availability of the village hall in May, the Clerk proposes a revised date of 26th May 2022. All Agree.

SS asks DF if he would still be available to be a guest speaker on the re-scheduled date, DF agrees.

Clerk to send invites and request reports from local groups

11. Ukraine Refugee Situation

The Clerk reports a NALC briefing was circulated to the PC 29-03-22. The Clerk informs although it is very important that the PC offer support to Ukrainian refugees and host families when it is required,

there is actually very little the PC can do as a corporate body at this stage. If the PC adopts GPC, it would be able to make a donation to a key national charity such as the DEC or British Red Cross. SS informs the community showed huge generosity and kindness in making donations to the British Red Cross during a collection SS and NS held recently.

IU reports there is a local Facebook page called Homes for Ukraine – Taunton Hosts that is in contact with Ukrainian refugees which is building a support network for host families in the area. IU recommends if the PC is approached for more information, the details of this group are shared.

IU to send the link to SS to publish on social media

DF expresses the importance that the appropriate checks are in place for host families and informs there is more information available on the SCC website:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/ukraine/refugee-resettlement/>

SS responds it is extremely important the right infrastructure and support is offered when it is required.

12. Signatories for the bank account post-election

The Clerk reports that three out of four signatories will be on the PC from May so there is no immediate requirement for this to happen. The Clerk expresses it would be good practice to have a fourth signatory, with the remaining PC members available to check bank reconciliations each month.

KdS to send mandate information to PH to become a full signatory to the PC account

13. Reeves Feast

Defer until the May meeting

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

14. Willey Road housing development

The Clerk reports Cllr. Sue Buller contacted the PC regarding planning application 36/21/0015. Cllr. Buller has sent an email to the case officer but received no response. Cllr. Buller has checked the SWT planning site for the above application only to see that another amended application was submitted on 4 April. This amendment covers parking, landscaping, the piece of no man's land and fencing etc.

The Clerk reports she has also sent an email to the case officer requesting an update on the application but has received no response.

A member of the public requests to ask DF what will happen within the SWT planning department under the single authority.

DF responds the current Somerset West and Taunton area is too large and needs to be broken down into smaller areas to be effective. DF continues there is an intended investment in planning enforcement with a review of the current processes.

15. Highways

Speed Limit in Meare Green

The Clerk reports the Traffic Management Officer (TMO) at SCC Highways has confirmed a scheduled start date for the Meare Green 30mph zone to commence from 3rd May 2022 with final costings for the project expected by the end of May 2022.

SS thanks the Clerk for her perseverance with this project that was instigated in September 2020.

A member of the public expresses their gratitude to the PC for taking the initiative to implement the 30mph speed limit in Meare Green

Two members of the public leave

Speedwatch

AF reports it has been difficult to arrange planned speedwatch sessions recently due to volunteers being on holiday, but it is hoped speed watch sessions can be planned for after the Easter holidays.

16. Footpaths

SS informs she is aware of the work being done by the local footpath group volunteers but suggests a report from the PC Footpath Officer could be presented to the PC.

Clerk to request a report for the next meeting from the Footpath Officer

The Clerk reports the footpath maintenance equipment requested by the Footpath Group volunteers has been purchased by the PC and delivered to SE for use by the group.

17. Stoke Environment Group

Stoke Environment Group update

JP reports the SEG is busy planning the Envirofair to be held on 25th June and is hoping for more feedback and participation from other local groups.

IU confirms focus is on the planned Envirofair with 28 organisations confirmed to be attending although interest from local groups including the Schools and Church have been difficult to attain.

IU continues that following feedback from the last fair; there will be an increased number of activities such as birds of prey displays, crafts with more interaction with younger members of the community.

IU reports work is progressing well on the Spinney with information boards now in place and a recent composting workshop was very successful with a good attendance.

The Green Charter

The Clerk reports GG has circulated a first draft of the statement of intent, values and what SSG believes in.

SS reports this should now be deferred until the new PC takes office.

Clerk to circulate GG's document to JM and IU

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

18. Floods

Flood Group Revision

PH reports a meeting of the current flood group is still yet to be arranged.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

19. Playing Fields

Playing Field gates / commemorative bench

SS reports the local Blacksmith has offered to make a commemorative bench in lieu of new gates for the Playing Fields. SS confirms the PFMC are happy with this suggestion. SS asks the PC where the best location for the bench would be. SS suggests outside the shop/pub as it is central to the village and close to the jubilee plaque already in place near the defibrillator.

IU suggests situating the bench at the bus stop and the bottom of Dark Lane. SS responds that there may be access issues with the bank at this location – but it is an option that can be considered.

SD to speak to the HOTV about the possibility of locating the bench outside the Royal Oak

Dog Fouling

SS informs she walks in the Playing Fields daily and dog fouling has always been an issue but recently it is becoming a problem in other areas of the village. SS continues it is not possible to ban dogs from the Playing Fields as a public footpath runs along the top of it. SS states the issue requires an approach that involves the whole village.

The Clerk informs the PC could contact SWTC to start the process of imposing a PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Order) under the anti-social behaviour, crime and policing Act 2014 which covers fouling of land by dogs and removal of dog faeces. The PC could also request dog fouling patrols in the area. The Clerk continues there are also initiatives such as green dog walkers' scheme, chalk stencils, pooper snooper – but these kind of initiatives would require an investment.

The Clerk reports there has been a case of 7 lambs still-born due to Toxocariasis in North Curry which was very distressing for the farmer and HV has reported excessive amounts of dog fouling in fields they have needed to remove before turning out the cattle.

SS requests the item is included on the May agenda to solidify an approach that can combat the issue and involve the whole community.

PH states the issue needs to be enforceable or be deemed so anti-social that it becomes self-enforcing.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

20. Heart of the Village

Nothing to report

21. Village website

Nothing to report

22. Broadband

The Clerk reports Airband have recently been in contact with the PC to inform of another personnel replacement required for a representative for our area. The Clerk will arrange a date for a public meeting once Airband have a representative to attend.

23. Consultations and Surveys

NALC – Specific issues from smaller councils for committee consultation

No issues were raised. The Clerk informs the deadline is 30-04-22 and requests if any issues are identified, please inform the Clerk by 28th April for submission.

DF leaves the meeting

24. Financial Matters

Standing Orders

01-04-22 K de Silva – Clerks Salary £377.00

Payments to be authorised

01-04-22 Nick Sloan - Web Administration £120.00

01-04-22 K de Silva - A4 Postage £8.07

01-03-22 Rockwell sign and print - Spring Newsletter £69.00

16-03-22 SLCC pslcc Membership until September £32.08

15-03-22 Parish Online - Annual Subscription £75.60

07-03-22 J Williams - Grass Cutting £90.00

09-03-22 CYP - Youth Project consultation £180.00

01-04-22 SALC - Clerk Election Training 16-03-22 £20.00

Payments Received

04-03-22 N Hector - Sponsorship of the Stoke News £69.00

31-03-22 SALC Grant for HOTV (transferred 04-04-22 to HOTV) £1500.00

Other financial items

Bank Reconciliation for March completed by GG

Transfer of the SALC grant to the HOTV 04-04-22 £1,500.00

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

25. Other items for discussion

Independent internal auditor for the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return)

The Clerk reports the previous PC Clerk, Rebecca Goodchild, has agreed to complete the internal audit this year after Elizabeth Hembrow stepped down last year after many years in the role.

The Clerk informs the annual accounts, AGAR and supporting documentation have now been circulated to the PC. The Clerk declares this is a true and accurate accounting statement and is satisfied it is now ready to be submitted to the internal auditor prior to an external audit by PKF Littlejohn.

SS thanks the Clerk for the diligent piece of work.

Clerk to communicate with RC to deliver the paperwork and request it is completed for the Chair to sign by 6th June 2022.

One member of the public leaves

26. Confidential Item

Clerk Salary review

It is agreed that the Clerk receive a 5% pay increase in line with the 2022-23 budget to reflect obtaining a CiLCA qualification and an annual pay review.

JP proposes the motion, AF seconds; all were in favour

Clerk to request AF amends annual salary on the banking mandate.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.15pm.

The Annual Parish Council Meeting will be held in the main hall at The Williams Hall Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 9th May 2022 at 7.30pm.

The full Parish Council meeting will commence immediately after the APCM.

Please email any items for the agenda to the clerk (ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk) by Friday 29th April 2022.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Thursday 26th May in the main hall at The Williams Hall. Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.

All are welcome. There will be light refreshments and an opportunity to speak to Parish Councillors and village group representatives after the meeting.