

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

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Held at The Pavilion, Willey Road, Stoke St Gregory.**

**Present** – Janice Pearce (Chair), Anne Merritt (Vice-Chair), Heather Venn, Ann Finn, Danny James, Ian Upshall, Jason Morgan, David Fothergill (County Councillor)

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

**155. Apologies for absence** – John Hembrow, Peter House, Sue Buller (District Councillor)

**Declarations of Interests and Dispensations** – None

**Public question time** – No members of the public are present.

### **156. Planning**

**36/22/0015 Chatsworth Cottage, Curload, Stoke St Gregory** - Demolition of garage and workshop and erection of a two-storey garden room with annexe above

WITHDRAWN

**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 36/21/0029/CQ)

WITHDRAWN

**36/22/0009 Willments Farm. Church Road, Stoke St Gregory** - Erection of an agricultural storage building

DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 21/10/22

**There are no new planning applications to consider**

### **157. Parking Issues on the Willey Road**

The Clerk reports a correspondence to the PC from a resident on Willey Road has been circulated raising issues regarding the school/preschool drop off and collection times reporting parents blocking driveways, parking inconsiderately and causing road safety issues. The resident has notified the schools on several occasions, but the communications circulated by the schools to the parents are not being heeded.

The resident requests double yellow lines along the Willey Road from the zigzags to the Playing Field.

JP informs this has been an on-going issue in the past. In May 2021 the PC contacted the local PCSO's to assist with ad-hoc visits to mitigate the parking issues. The Church, Playing Fields, Village Hall and HOTV have all offered parking spaces for the duration of school drop off and collection times. JP reports she has contacted the school and spoken to the Deputy Head to raise the issue of inconsiderate and unsafe parking.

DJ informs the school circulate regular communications regarding safeguarding and parking around the schools; but it is always the same several culprits who ignore the requests. DJ states it is not just an inconvenience it is a highways safety issue. DJ suggests naming and shaming may be an option with vehicle registration numbers of perpetrators being published.

HV reports there has been considerable discussions regarding yellow lines in the past, but this is not viable. People will ignore yellow lines, especially if they are only there to drop-off/pick-up children. TRO's (Traffic Road Orders) have huge cost implications and with yellow lines on both sides of the Willey Road, this lends itself to increasing the natural speed of the road which is not the desired outcome in an advisory 20mph zone.

**Clerk to contact the local PCSO team to inform of on-going issues and request ad-hoc visits during these periods**

**JP to liaise with the school to discuss options and request an SCC warden visits the site**

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

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

#### **Allocation of £2000 for the Village Plan project**

DJ reports the village plan will be incurring costs as the plan develops. The primary costs will be for printing and advertising. DJ reports it is unlikely the full £2000 will be spent, but the program is fast moving and an allocation of funding to cover costs as they arise is required.

HV asks if CIL can be used. The Clerk responds the CIL officer has been contacted who informed;

*“You are working with SALC and CCS which provides the Collecting Authority (SW&T) with confidence that this work will follow an established process and a set of established guidelines.*

*The creation of the Community Plan must involve consultation with your residents.*

*The Community Plan must address the provision, operation, maintenance, improvement or replacement of infrastructure and community facilities that will cater to the demands of existing residents and those that will be brought into the area by development taking place.*

*Subject to the above I would agree that CIL funds held by the Parish Council could be used to facilitate this project.”*

HV enquires if PC reserves can be used to fund the project. The Clerk informs this would need to be allocated from the grants budget. IU suggests it is not a Parish Council plan; it is a community plan and funding should come from CIL as this is technically money for the improvement of the community and meets the criteria as agreed by the CIL officer.

HV proposes £2000 of CIL monies is allocated to the Village plan project, with remaining funds in April 2023 returned to the CIL sub-account for re-allocation. IU seconds the motion; all in favour. MOTION CARRIED.

### **159. Transfer of the allotments**

The Clerk reports the solicitor acting on behalf of the PC has been asked to provide evidence of progress. They have informed efforts have been stymied by a lack of activity on the part of the developers’ solicitors. GG has contacted the developer of Broomfield Park on behalf of the PC to request influence is exercised to progress the matter.

### **160. SSG Village Plan update**

DJ has circulated a progress report to the PC. The Village Plan is progressing rapidly. Since the last PC meeting the steering group have achieved the following;

- The steering group has grown with the addition of two younger members to encourage the younger people to engage in the programme. Steering Group members and volunteers can be found around the village wearing an “ask me about the village plan” badge.
- A pre-cursor consultation exercise has been completed where the community could feed into the main survey topics
- Social media campaigns are continuing
- An elevator statement and a set of FAQ’s has been devised
- Two banners have been purchased and displayed with a third to follow
- An article has been drafted for the Parish Magazine
- A flyer insert will be delivered with the winter edition of the Stoke News. Materials publicising the survey and plan are being placed in prominent places around the village
- A PowerPoint presentation has been developed and was recently shown at the village breakfast
- Interviews with Tone FM and Radio Somerset to publicise the project have been arranged.
- Village Plan representatives are attending local events and groups to raise awareness of the upcoming survey and project
- All key community groups have been contacted for support – the response is encouraging
- Several ‘drop-in ‘sessions will be organised to field any questions or offer help if required to complete the survey with paper copies being available and, in some cases, delivered by hand so all members of the community can be included in the survey

*The Village Plan survey will go live on 28<sup>th</sup> November until 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Every member of the community is encouraged to take part; this is an opportunity to have your say on the future of our village <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/StokeStGregoryVP>*

### **161. County Councillor report**

DF reports SCC is currently £22 million overspent; this will be mitigated by reserves for this fiscal year. Next year will be challenging with an expected deficit of £70 million which could be reduced to £30-£40 million with the savings of moving to a unitary council expected to be £18.5-£20 million. It is expected there will need to be savings made which are not budgeted for, so it could be a difficult 12 months financially.

A lot will depend on central government decisions which may change; including allowing Council Tax to be increased which is currently capped.

Vesting day for the Unitary Council is still planned for April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. At present the reforms are behind schedule. Executive appointments should have been made by this point but are now not expected until early 2023.

The Local Community Networks (LCN's) Executive meeting has now been delayed until after Christmas, so the debate of this will now not happen until early 2023.

DF informs there is currently 1560 Ukrainians within the County spread over approximately 750 residences. Some of these hosting arrangements are coming to the end of the 6 months, but there is still 2500 on the host register.

There is a number of Ukrainian children attending schools in the County. These children are adapting incredibly well, with the only concern being they are becoming increasingly more anglicised, making it harder to integrate back into life in Ukraine once this is possible.

JP enquires as there is a delay in the LCN debate - does this mean some of the proposals can be challenged. DF responds out of the 550 responses to the consultation by 270 Parishes – overwhelmingly nobody liked the current options. Now, the geographies principles will be redefined. £900,000 has been ringfenced for LCN's (which equates to £50,000 based on 18 LCNs).

The Clerk asks when the consultation results will be published in the public domain. DF responds it will be internal with a preferred plan being published based on the consultation.

DF suggests the asset and service devolution could be delayed by up to 5 years.

JP asks where the necessary County savings/cutbacks will come from. DF responds they can't be made on Statutory services – it will be other areas.

DF reports the Taunton Town Council is now in shadow and will come into being on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

### **162. The Youth Project**

DJ has circulated a November update on the project to the PC.

Danny James will now take on the lead role for the project from Anne Merritt.

The report stated AM had done a great job on her own to make the case and fight for as much of the CIL money as possible. AM will still have a key role in the Younger generation project moving forward.

This (and other projects) are intrinsically linked to the outcomes of the Village Plan. From previous meetings held with the younger generation in the village, and through some of the responses to the CIL questionnaire/online consultation, the priorities of the community can be obtained and analysed. What has been established during the CIL process is that £30k is not going to be sufficient to provide what the community may wish to see, significant additional funding will be required through grant applications.

The Village Plan will set out a common understanding of what needs to happen to make the village an even better place in which to live and work. It will consequently hugely strengthen any case to secure additional grants/funding to make further improvements to SSG as it will provide evidence of demand.

DJ intends to use the Village Plan to maximise the outcome for the younger generation (and the village as a whole) once the Plan is published.

The Village Plan will be complete on 31<sup>st</sup> March but there is plenty that can and is being done now in the background.

### 163. Village place of safety

IU reports he has recently attended the Somerset Community Resilience day event. Examples were given where in an emergency situation (such as the floods in 2014) a central point of focus is identified which is easily accessible, can allow for emergency vehicle access and has communication facilities. The nominated site would act as an information point and incident room in an emergency to offer advice and provision. In SSG, the best option to consider for this would be the Village Hall. JP suggests an information pack could be devised for distribution to include important contacts, so people know who to contact in an emergency situation. IU agrees citing this should be done in digital and hard copy format with copies left in prominent places in the village. It could include all important contacts, maps of the village, areas identifying vulnerable people and properties, powerlines etc that could be useful information in an emergency situation. The principle would be to have a central incident point within the community.

HV informs potential access routes to the village should be included as in previous situations, emergency vehicles have attempted to access the village from Burrowbridge which have not been able to gain access. IU informs the objective of such a plan would be the emergency services could have contact with a principle contact on the ground through the contingency plan.

JM suggests contacting the emergency services liaison for guidance on what vital information could be provided from us as a community in an emergency event.

HV agrees citing the ambulance service still access the village from Huntham. Satnavs inform this is the shortest route although it is not the quickest or most suitable. These lanes can also be flooded at times.

DF informs it is not just flooding, it could be a tanker spillage, train crash – any incident.

IU agrees to draft a Community Emergency and Incident Response Plan for SSG and contact the relevant sources to acquire what information is required.

### 164. Warm community hubs

JP circulated a report on the warm hub initiative to the PC informing a well-attended meeting was held in October with people involved with available facilities and/or provided a service within the community. Six volunteers have offered to help with the project on a regular basis and to provide soup. The hub would be available for all ages with a variety of interesting things being considered depending on the need and requirement for the initiative being tested.

The current location will be at the HOTV with a rotation of other venues will be considered as the initiative develops.

A Village larder has been set up by members of the community. This is situated at the left-hand side of the Parish Church rooms and comprises of a shelf for tins and bottles and a large metal cabinet for dry groceries. Anyone can use the larder which can be accessed from 9am – 6pm and take what they require. Donations are also welcomed.

Unfortunately, they are unable to accept fresh produce at this time due to inadequate refrigeration facilities.

IU enquires if the initiative could be a long-term project for the village. JP responds yes – there is possibilities for the initiative to be developed. It involves social inclusion, support, combats rural isolation/loneliness and the cost-of-living crisis; it is more than providing a warm hub.

*The village larder is available to all that need it. Donations are welcomed and can be left at the site. If you require any further information on the warm hub or the village larder, or can assist with volunteering, please contact Janice Pearce on [pearce.janice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pearce.janice@hotmail.co.uk) or telephone 07856 290085*

AM informs there will be no 'Give back at Christmas' this year due to the cost-of-living crisis but agrees to advertise the larder and hubs.

**AM to post about the hubs and larder on social media**

### 165. Street Lighting in Church Close

The Clerk informs a member of the Community has enquired if there is a possibility of turning off the street lighting in Church Close at night to save electricity usage.

The Clerk informs there was a SCC scheme for the reduction of street lighting in Somerset, but this appears to have expired. The Clerk asks DF if this scheme is a viable option.

DF responds the PC would be required to consult the residents of Church Close to ascertain if a majority would agree with the proposal. If a majority did agree and a timer is already on the lighting columns then this could be altered, but there is a high likelihood that they are on a sensor. DF informs changing sensors to timers on street lighting columns would cost thousands of pounds.

HV enquires if it were considered what time the lighting would be turned off. The Clerk responds the examples researched are generally from midnight – 5am.

DF agrees to investigate if the current lights are on a sensor or timer to ascertain if it could be a viable option.

IU and JM agree to engage with the residents of Church Close to obtain thoughts on current street lighting.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

### 166. Budget and Precept Planning

The Clerk has circulated the half year financial review and a first draft of a 23/24 fiscal year budget for consideration.

The first draft forecasts are -

Forecast 23/24 Expenditure = £26,764.08. The Clerk has worked on a CPI index of 10.1% increase for day to day costs.

(This includes £1000 for lost services and £2000 legal fees which if not used for their intended purpose in 22/23 can be carried over meaning an actual total of £23,764.08)

Forecast Income for 23/24 NOT including the precept is £1508.00

Variance of £22,256.08

With a precept of £17,600 + unmarked reserves from 22/23 of £3326.42 + £1508 other income = £22,434.42

The Clerk explains it is advised within the JPAG to hold 12 months of reserves. The Clerk recommends a general reserve of £15,000. There is £10,000 earmarked reserves for the Meare Green speed zone which is yet to be invoiced.

The budget is discussed line by line. After a full, frank, and productive discussion; the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of budgeted expenditure totals £30,814.08

It is agreed for each councillor to review the new figures and wait until the revised tax base figures are released from SW&T which is anticipated by the end of November.

The Clerk informs the budget submission deadline is 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Clerk to circulate 2<sup>nd</sup> draft. Item to be added to the next agenda

### 167. Private hedge cutting and maintenance

HV reports this is an ongoing issue. Private hedge overgrowth/ingress effects visibility splays and causes road safety issues for vehicles and pedestrians. HV informs heading down to Curload hill is particularly bad. Numerous communications have been sent in the past and HV has spoken to a number of land owners – but if people don't want to cut hedges, they won't cut them.

HV suggests an issue is defining what is the landowner's boundary with the highway boundary and establish how it is managed.

DJ agrees to investigate the legislation on this.

Clerk to email highways to raise the issue and seek advice

### **168. Policy for insets in the Stoke Newsletter**

The Clerk informs the editor of the Stoke News has enquired if a policy is required for inserts in the Stoke Newsletter. They are concerned that numerous groups may wish to include an insert which could potentially become an onerous task for the delivery volunteers. They state there is plenty of enthusiasm which is not to be discouraged; but the question is whether to have inserts in each edition from the same organisation or how many inserts is acceptable to have in any given edition. It is agreed that each edition should include only one insert, per organisation. The request for an insert to be included must be submitted to the editor in plenty of time for the deadline. The organisation should put the insert in the newsletter.

Inserts should only be for village groups and organisations and not businesses, although local businesses are encouraged and welcomed to sponsor the newsletter.

**Clerk to forward response to JH**

### **169. Somerset Emergency Community Contacts**

The Clerk reports Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Unit has requested contact details of a person in nominated to be the first point of contact and liaison during emergencies.

It is agreed this will be incorporated as part of the 'Emergency and Incident Response Plan'

**Clerk to contact the Civil Contingencies Officer informing her a plan will be drafted with an agreed contact in the near future**

### **170. Broomfield Park**

Nothing to report

### **171. Highways**

AF reports there has been four Speedwatch recently. 20 out of 200 vehicles were still exceeding the 30mph speed limit in Meare Green. AF reports unfortunately one person stopped to question the volunteers in a rude manner with another deliberately driving through water to wet the volunteers. This is unacceptable behaviour towards volunteers, supported and trained by a Somerset and Avon police, who are trying to make the roads in our village safer.

AF informs there has been a mention of having a speedwatch on Willey Road. If there are volunteers on the Willey Road willing to join speedwatch, then this can a possibility as the equipment is available.

DJ reports Curload has also enquired about doing speedwatch, but there is insufficient volunteers for this to happen.

*If you are interested in joining speedwatch or would like further information on this please email Ann Finn at [annfinn2017@gmail.com](mailto:annfinn2017@gmail.com)*

### **172. Footpaths**

Nothing to report

### **173. Stoke Environment Group update**

IU circulated an update report to the PC from the SEG. The report information included;

- Monthly meetings are usually held in the Church rooms; everyone is welcome  
- The group are identifying new projects and continuing longer term projects which include (not exhaustive);

- Improvements to the Willey road phone kiosk including a noticeboard
- Establishing a community resource hub
- Managing and developing a prospective nature area
- Continued maintenance of the spinney at the Village Hall
- Envirofair 2023 planning and preparation
- Launching a Rural community energy support network
- Footpath work and improvement

IU expresses gratitude to the PC for the awarding of CIL funds to realise the work of the group. The SEG also offer their support for the Village plan organised by a steering group separate to the PC.



## **COP 27 update**

JP has circulated a report on attending the COP 27 conference in Somerton. The outcomes of the event were;

- A consensus is that PC's need to lobby for better planning legislation. At present there are many new buildings that do not meet carbon neutral targets by 2030. The system at present is flawed
- To empower Parish Councils to have a greater influence on the nature of future planning projects
- To concentrate on what we can do immediately in our Parishes e.g., plant many more trees of a variety of species
- Provide information hubs for the community regarding reducing their carbon footprint
- The Unitary Authority will aim to provide a specialist to offer independent advice to each area on how to make our homes more energy efficient.
- Encourage the use of public transport
- Encourage the Community to use less energy
- Create a Community gardens which is owned and cultivated by the village and those who work in it have the produce
- Encourage cycling, walking the footpaths and using local facilities
- Recycling and upcycling projects
- Creating a community resilience group that respond to the effects of climate change such as adverse weather conditions. We have an established floods group, but we need to look at hot weather and its effects on the elderly and the very young.

JP comments that as a Parish we are achieving some of the outcomes and expresses thanks to the SEG on taking the lead with such projects.

### **174. Floods**

HV reports the spillway at Hook Bridge has been running and expected to run again in the next week.

### **175. Playing Fields**

IU reports there are currently some issues with the playing fields which should be addressed in a unified way with the support of the PC, PFMC and other local stakeholders.

**Clerk to draft a letter to the PFMC for circulation and approval**

### **176. Community Woodland proposals**

IU reports the SEG have been in contact with land agents to investigate and identify options which could be considered for a community woodland. Further updates will be forthcoming as they develop.

### **177. Heart of the Village**

Nothing to report

### **178. Village website**

Item deferred until the next meeting

### **179. Broadband**

Nothing to report. The current issues with the box on Church Close seem to be resolved

### **180. Consultations and surveys**

None received

### **181. Financial matters**

#### **Standing Orders**

01-11-22 K de Silva – Clerks Salary for October

£546.00

Received £395.85 Standing order for 29 hours

01-11-22 K de Silva - Clerks standing order not amended outstanding for 40 hours

£150.15

Standing order to be authorised by the signatories (21-10-22)

**Payments to be authorised**

SALC - Clerk Training 08-09-22	£30.00
Janice Pearce - Reimbursement for Queen memorial wreath	£50.00
K de Silva - Clerks expenses Ink, paper, and stamps	£29.95
Williams Hall - Hall Hire	£60.00
G Wagen and James - Burial Ground mowing Sept/Oct	£84.00
Nick Sloan - Website administration October	£120.00

**Village Plan Payments**

D James - Reimbursement for badges	£36.61
D James - Reimbursement for banners	£79.50
A Van Pelt - Reimbursement for Mailchimp survey	£35.04

**Payments Received**

K de Silva - Difference from Footpath tool refund and purchase of new tool	£5.04
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**Other financial items**

Bank Reconciliation for October completed by JM

HV proposes all payments are made, JM seconds the motion; all in favour. MOTION CARRIED

**182. Other items for discussion**

AM explains the Christmas Dinner event the preschool and school organise each year for the children. Due to rising costs and financial constraints; AM requests the PC make a grant donation of £150 each to contribute to the event. All were in favour of granting the money to the event.

**AM to deliver the grant cheques to the preschool and school.**

DJ requests the PC authorise funding the incentives for a draw of people completing the village plan of 2 vouchers. This has been recommended by CCS. DJ proposes 2 vouchers of £50 – one for an adult draw and once for young people draw.

HV recommends the adult draw voucher for £50 should be to spend at the HOTV with the young persons draw voucher being a £50 amazon voucher. All were in favour.

**DJ to purchase vouchers to the total sum of £100**

DJ requests as part of the village plan and community cohesion, a collective commitment agreement is signed by key village organisations. The Collective agreement states;

*This is our village and right now this is our opportunity to help shape its future, not just for us but for future generations.*

*This Village Plan cannot succeed if we are not all committed to working hard to deliver it. This means working together as a collective whole for the benefit of everyone.*

*We hope you agree that Stoke St Gregory deserves a bright future. The following key organisations and groups within the Village have all pledged to make this commitment to work together and we urge you to do the same.*

DJ requests the PC sign the collective commitment; all agree. Janice signs the commitment on behalf of the PC.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was closed at 10.13pm

**The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 7.30pm.**