

## STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.

**Present** – Janice Pearce (Chair), Anne Merritt (Vice-Chair), Heather Venn, Peter House, John Hembrow, Ian Upshall, Ann Finn, Jason Morgan, Sue Buller (District Councillor), David Fothergill (County Councillor)

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

**239. Apologies for absence** – Danny James

**Declarations of Interests and Dispensations** – None

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

#### **240. Planning**

**36/23/0001/HR** – Notification of the removal of a maximum of 30 metres of hedgerow (and full replacement) on land to the North of Curload Farm, Stoke St Gregory.

The following response was agreed:

*The removal of 30m of hedge should be reduced to 12-20m. The hedge should be removed before the start of the fledgling season and should be replaced with the equivalent, older and mature hedging at a reduced length as soon as possible once works have been completed.*

**36/23/0002/HR** – Notification of the removal of 20 metres of hedgerow on land to the west of the River Tone, West of Curload farm and relating to the Hook Bridge Spillway

The following response was agreed:

*The PC support this application with no further comments.*

**36/22/0026 – 16 Willey Road, Stoke St Gregory** – Replacement of a conservatory with the erection of a single storey extension to the rear

**DECISION** – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL (25/01/23)

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

HV reports there has been further issues with another resident reporting their driveway being blocked by the same vehicle which was reported blocking another drive before Christmas.

*The PC respectfully request people park with consideration and do not block the access points of homes on the Willey Road. There is parking available just a short walk from the school at the Playing Fields, the Church, the Royal Oak, and the Village Hall, which have all kindly offered use of the facilities for the school drop off and collection times.*

IU enquires if the HOTV will be erecting signage outside the shop and pub to request patrons use the car park provided to minimise parking on the corner and the bay directly outside the shop.

**JP to contact the HOTV Chairman regarding signage for the car park.**

#### **242. Village Website**

JM reports he has researched other village / Parish Council websites. JM informs the Creech St Michael website includes photographs as navigation tools, it is engaging and easily accessible. JM adds the mobile phone access to the SSG site could possibly be optimised.

IU suggests the website should have objectives, markers and usage reporting incorporated. It should not a passive tool. AM informs the website will only be as good as the information which is submitted by the community for inclusion on the website. PH expresses the website is also an important depository for information. HV responds the website in its current form serves this purpose.

A discussion ensues on the website, how it is used and how its engagement can be improved.

JP recommends further research on other websites is carried out by members of the PC with the item included on the next agenda for further discussion.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

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

##### **Petanque Court Application**

JP informs the person spearheading the application has been indisposed and requests the item is deferred until the next meeting.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

##### **Grant application from the Baptist Church for the stables restoration**

The Clerk reports an application has been circulated to the PC from the Baptist Church for the sum of £5000 to contribute to the fundraising efforts and grants already secured for the renovation of the stables.

The Clerk informs the PC does not have financial resources to provide the grant without it being allocated from the CIL. There is £21,258.12 of CIL which has not been earmarked. This application equates to a quarter of the remaining funds which are available.

The Clerk suggests it may be prudent to defer a decision on the application until the outcomes of the village plan consultation are published. The consultation results are currently being analysed prior to the plan being finalised in March.

JM agrees citing if the village plan identifies a project which will be advantageous to the wider community – it may not be the right time to allocate such a large portion of the remaining unearmarked CIL at present.

The PC agree to request further information on the application to ascertain how the stables can be used and utilised by the wider community, how it would be used and by who, is Listed Building Consent required and how much difference / benefit will the renovation make to the whole community with spaces already available at the Church Rooms, Royal Oak, Village Hall and the pavilion.

Clerk to contact the applicant to request further information and add the item to the April agenda

#### **244. Maize planting communications**

The Clerk informs in previous years the PC has contacted local farmers requesting a sufficient margin of 1.5m be left that are subject to a right of way.

All agree the drafted communication be sent to local farmers.

Clerk to send communication.

#### **245. Private hedge cutting and maintenance**

##### **Update**

IU reports the hedgerows throughout the village have significantly improved. The PC expresses gratitude to those who have assisted with this. IU informs the 2 x 30mph signs on the Willey Road are no longer visible.

Clerk to request the contractor who maintains grassed areas visit and clear the signs

##### **Hedge on Huntham Lane**

JP informs a Parishioner has raised concerns regarding the overgrowth of the hedge near the school on the Huntham Lane. The Clerk informs this has been reported to SCC requesting they are cut ahead of the fledgling season.

##### **Willow hedge at the top of Curload**

The Clerk reports a Parishioner has raised concerns regarding the willow hedge which has been erected at the top of Curload. The concerns raised are whether the fence has been erected on Highways land or within the curtilage of the property.

Clerk to contact SCC road records to request a definitive map of highways throughout the Parish

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda

#### **246. SSG Village Plan**

Due to the absence of DJ the following report was submitted ahead of the meeting:

*“The Steering Group met (virtually) on the 19th January and we have spent the last few weeks analysing the survey data. This has been pulled together into a report, which will essentially form the evidence base behind the final village plan.*

*A training session was held on 9th Feb which focused on building the action plan - the key part of the plan. Over the next few weeks, the steering group will be drafting that action plan before creating the final village plan in March.”*

JP reports the CCS have made positive comments regarding the submission of work so far.

IU asks if there is a legal obligation for the final action plan to be adopted by the PC. JP responds the final plan will be presented to the PC in April. It is a proposed community plan, which has been developed by a steering group based on the responses from the community through consultation. The consultation had a good response rate and is a representation of the village.

#### **247. County Councillor report**

DF reports schedules are very busy as vesting day for the Unitary Authority on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 approaches rapidly. The 22/23 SCC budget was overspent by £23 Million. The 23/24 budget will be set in the coming week - which will undoubtedly be challenging. Some of the suggested proposals such as not filling of grit bins and planning processes have been overturned, but in the future, it is proposed neighbouring properties to planning applications will not be informed by the planning department.

There are two upcoming full council meetings to agree and align policies from all four districts and County Councils which must be agreed prior to the vesting day.

DF informs the recruitment processes are behind schedule; Tier two recruitments did not happen until Christmas. Tier 3 appointments are not expected until the end of March; with Tier 4 staff roles being appointed after the vesting day. DF expresses the pressure is on to deliver the new budget, new council, and policies ahead of the vesting day.

SB informs the next PC meeting will be her last as a District Councillor. SB expresses frustration in that through all her effort – little has been achieved in 4 years due to bureaucracy.

The PC acknowledge the work and effort Cllr. Buller has applied during her time as a District Councillor for SSG. The PC express gratitude to SB for all her support to the PC and the Parish during her time in office.

#### **248. Local Community Networks (LCN's)**

DF reports the planned networks have been published with SSG included in the Levels and Moors network. There will be a subsequent paper published in the coming weeks following a full council meeting defining the local community networks and what is anticipated from the networks.

#### **249. The Younger Generation project**

Due to the absence of DJ, the following report was submitted ahead of the meeting;

*“DJ attended the PFMC meeting last month, and it was agreed that he could form a working group to deliver 'the youth project' (Working title).*

*Site visits are planned with contractors. The purpose of these visits is to expand on the desktop feasibility studies that have been carried out already, to enable research for fielding any questions, and to educate the working group with as much information as possible ready for the point of presenting the various options to the community and younger people of the village. The working group will be planning a meet and greet to attract children of all ages to come and hear what the various options are to enable the project to move forward.*

*Despite the very best efforts of the Village plan steering group; the response rate from people under the age of 18 was extremely low when it came to filling out the village plan survey.*

*More updates including information, proposals and dates will be announced in due course.”*

#### **250. Emergency and incident response plan**

IU reports progress is being made on building and developing the plan. The flood plan requires updating and incorporating into the plan. IU recommends the plan should not just be about floods - even though flooding is the most frequently witnessed incident in this area – it's about immediate action, the initial first response, the role of the PC and nominated individuals, and how to communicate with the community prior to external agencies and emergency services arriving. IU informs he will be speaking to neighbouring Parishes for input as we are not a Parish in isolation - it should be part of an integrated plan.

The plan will include a list of actions and annexes that can be applied to individual incidents.

IU notifies once the draft plan is complete, further assistance will be required from the PC before it is adopted.

#### **251. Warm community hubs**

JP reports the food larder set up at the Church has not been used much and discussions are underway with village groups to distribute the contents.

#### **252. Street lighting in Church Close**

JP reports a communication has been drafted and circulated to the PC for approval to send to the residents of Church Close to gauge the opinion from residents on street lighting in Church Close.

**JM & IU to print and deliver the correspondence to the residents**

**Clerk to record and report any responses received**

#### **253. Gates and access from the allotments to Church Close**

JM reports he has not received any communication from the contractor.

**Clerk to contact the contractor.**

#### **254. Transfer of the allotment to the PC**

JM reports there have been recent issues being addressed which may have held up the outstanding planning application at Broomfield Park being approved. This may be a contributing factor to the delay on the transferral of the allotments to the PC.

The Clerk informs she has not received any further updates.

#### **255. Kings Coronation**

JP reports the Playing Fields Management Committee have kindly agreed to allow for the use of the Playing Fields for a fete from 2pm – 5pm on the Bank Holiday Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The Cricket Club have offered to do a bar and map out a rounders pitch for a village rounders match. Local organisations have all been contacted and are considering their contributions which could include raffles, stalls, children's activities and fundraising opportunities for individual local groups.

The Tennis Club have also kindly offered to open up the courts for supervised tennis.

JP informs most people will wish to watch the coronation on the Saturday, on the Sunday individual roads are reporting they are organising their own gatherings.

*If you wish to contribute in anyway to the Kings Coronation Village Fete please contact Janice Pearce on [pearcejanice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pearcejanice@hotmail.co.uk)*

#### **256. Parish Clock**

The Clerk reports it is a very specialised job to replace the broken spring. The spring is currently being cast in Cumbria. There are no timescales as yet, but it is hoped to have the spring returned and fitted, with the pendulum rehung and calibrated as soon as possible.

#### **257. 2023 Meeting date changes, Annual Parish Meeting (APM) and guest speaker**

The Clerk informs some of the PC meeting dates of the second Monday of the month fall on Bank holidays this year. The PC is not permitted to convene on a bank holiday.

The PC agree for the Clerk to enquire if there is availability to move the meetings in April and May to the third Monday of the Month.

**Clerk to contact VH to enquire on the availability of the meeting room.**

The Clerk informs the PC must hold an APM (Annual Parish Meeting) between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June. The APM is a statutory meeting for all the local electors of the Parish. Historically the meeting has included written and presented reports from local organisations and a guest speaker.

A discussion ensues on possible guest speaker and tentative dates.

**Clerk to contact possible guest speaker suggestions, contact local organisations to request a submission of a report and check tentative availability of the VH.**

**Add item to the next agenda.**

## **258. Broomfield Park**

HV enquires when the junction markings on Broomfield Park / Willey Road will be organised.

**Clerk to enquire with the site manager to follow up the query**

## **259. Highways**

### **Gritting – Curload diversion routes**

The Clerk reports a submission was made in September 2022 for the replenishing of the grit bins to the SCC following the set-out process. It was highlighted in January the grit had not been replenished. The Clerk emailed the SCC Highways service manager on 10/01/23 and 16/01/23 but received no response. DF suggests escalating the issue to the portfolio holder.

**Clerk to contact MR**

The Clerk informs during the recent flooding when the A361 was closed traffic was diverted through Curload. Due to the surface water freezing - hazardous road conditions were reported to the Clerk.

The Clerk contacted SCC Highways to query why the diversion route could not be gritted.

DF explains the complex processes and due diligence of the gritting. Routes are agreed in June, lorries are deployed in June to map the routes which is fed into a computer. The drivers do not have the ability to override this – the route is mapped, with a rate of grit dispensed against road temperatures.

DF recommends the PC request alternative routes are submitted to SCC to map ahead of June to consider diversion routes as a contingency should roads be closed due to flooding in the future.

**Clerk to request diversion routes are included on the mapping ahead of June to Highways**

### **Relocate grit bin no2 at the Baptist Church to Curload**

The Clerk enquires if the second bin which was hit by a vehicle on Griggs Hill could be re-purposed and placed in Curload and if so, where would be a suitable location.

JM recommends by the river towards the Athelney side could be considered.

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

## **260. Footpaths**

### **Gate authorisation T25/31**

The PC acknowledge the correspondence from SCC informing of the installation of field gates on Footpath T25/31.

## **261. Stoke Environment Group**

### **Update**

IU submitted a report ahead of the PC meeting with a SEG task list for 2023. The report included;

The SEG continue to hold monthly meetings – all are welcome.

The annual tidy up of the spinney at the Village Hall and coppicing is underway. It is positive to see four field mice within this habitat.

Plans are being considered with regards to the refurbishment of the bus shelter near the Royal Oak and the telephone kiosk at the entrance to the Playing Fields.

The SEG has approached the PFMC to undertake work to tidy and refurbish the picnic area at the Playing Fields.

Preparations are well underway for the Envirofair 23 with lots of activities and presentations from groups such as the Somerset wildlife trust, Woodland trust, Secret world, reimagining the levels, Somerset wildlands and Sharandys owl rescue amongst some of the participants involved.

Work on the local footpath network will resume as the weather improves. Local footpath guides and newsletters are currently being compiled. There will also be additional events organised by the SEG including:

- Wildlife Discovery Family Event – with help from Somerset Wildlife Trust and the Somerset Botany Group
- Bat Detective Walk – with Somerset Wildlife Group and the Somerset Bat Specialist Group
- Adapt and Save – a fun workshop to look at how the climate is changing our environment and what we can do to adapt and benefit from these changes.
- Birds of Stoke St Gregory – A guided walk led by a local professional ornithologist where we will look for the ordinary and the extraordinary (did you know a White-Tailed Eagle was recently spotted in Stoke St Gregory?).

## 262. Community Woodland proposals

There is currently no further update to report

## 263. Playing Field

DJ informed the PC in advance he had informed the PFMC on maintenance issues which had been raised by the PC. The PFMC AGM will be held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March at 7.30pm at the pavilion – all are welcome.

## 264. Floods

JH reports there is still flooding on the Huntham Lane. The ditch is full of mud and silt which is causing surface water not draining sufficiently.

**Clerk to report the flooding via the SCC app**

HV informs she will be attending a meeting with the EA to discuss the outcomes of the recent flooding. PH informs it was chaotic with the road closures. The identified trigger points worked well, although they should have been triggered sooner.

## 265. Heart of the village

JP reports the HOTV recently held a meeting which informed of a committee structural changes are in the process.

The PC expresses its wishes to support and maintain a thriving business, pub and shop which is integral to the community. The PC agree to request, as a shareholder and as a representative body of the village, a copy of the current accounts, current business plan and associated conditions.

**IU and JP to draft a letter requesting the information required from the HOTV.**

## 266. Broadband

The Clerk informs a correspondence has been sent to the community liaison officer for Airband to engage with the PC on the upcoming project.

## 267. Consultations and surveys

**SWTC New Street Trading Policy** – It is agreed Parish Councillors would respond independently  
**Somerset statement of community involvement consultation** – deferred until the March meeting

## 268. Financial matters

### Financial matters

#### Standing Orders

01-02-23 K de Silva – Clerks Salary for December (29 Hours)	£395.85
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#### Payments to be authorised

14-02-12 K de Silva - Clerks expenses - black and colour printer ink	£29.32
N Sloan - website administration	£120.00
Woodhill fencing - rehanging of the burial ground gate	£216.00
J Williams - Hedge cutting and grass cutting	£150.00
G Wagen and James - Burial ground cutting	£42.00
Rockwell sign and print - Autumn Newsletter	£74.00

**Payments Received**

A Merritt - Youth Project fundraising

£590.00

**Other financial items**

None

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

**269. Other items for discussion**

None

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was closed at 9.37pm

**The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.30pm.**

DRAFT