

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 17th April 2023 in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.

Present – Janice Pearce (Chair), Anne Merritt, Heather Venn, Peter House, John Hembrow, Ian Upshall, Ann Finn, Danny James, Sue Buller (District Councillor), Norman Cavill (Somerset Councillor)

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

1. Apologies for absence – Jason Morgan and Faye Cross (Airband Broadband Community Liaison Officer)

The minutes of the previous PC meeting are approved and signed accordingly.

Declarations of Interests and Dispensations – JH declares an interest in planning application 36/23/0007 and will abstain from any vote.

Public question time – A member of the public reports that speeding within the 30mph speed limit in Meare Green is getting worse. They inform the PC of near miss incidents citing it is an accident waiting to happen.

They ask the PC if there is an opportunity to improve the signage or request enforcement.

AF apologises there has not been any recent speed watch, this is due to personal circumstances.

AF informs with the increased number of potholes and the camber in the road, it is becoming very difficult to walk along the edge of the road in Meare Green safely.

The Clerk suggests the PC contact the Police Commissioner to enquire if there are any pilot schemes rolling out and also contact Somerset Council regarding the installation of a SID and the costings involved. The Clerk informs due to the economic climate, there are currently no small improvement schemes available, and the PC would be expected to pay the costs.

IU suggests there is a need to look at the overall picture of speeding within the village to devise a wholistic plan moving forward. IU informs speeding is also an issue in Curload, Dark Lane and Huntham. IU suggests that although the repeater signs and speed limit in Meare Green are compliant and installed by SCC Highways, they are not sufficient.

Cllr. Cavill recommends all road issues and incidents are reported via the Somerset Council website. HV agrees citing that the more incidences that are reported, it will assist with building a case for prevention measures to be considered as a priority by Somerset Council.

Clerk to investigate SID / VAW signs and any proposed Police commissioner schemes reduce speeding. Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

A member of the public wishes to raise concerns of anti-social behaviour at the Village Hall. They report of vehicles in the car park between 11pm and 2am with loud music playing, driving in 'do-nuts' and generally causing a disturbance.

The Clerk informs the PC has been in conversation with the PCSO's about this matter. The PC has also requested increased patrols to the village during these hours.

The member of the public asks if CCTV could be considered at the Village Hall as a deterrent.

IU informs he and the member of the public attended a recent meeting with the PCSOs to discuss the matter with the PCSO suggesting CCTV or gates.

IU recommends the PC work with the Village Hall committee to investigate why this anti-social behaviour happens, ascertain, and understand what the issues are, establish a pattern of behaviour and record this ahead of discussions to install CCTV and gates which may not prevent the problems.

HV asks if timed gates could be considered. IU responds he agrees with this concept, but it's about the obtaining the right balance of inconvenience as the Village Hall is used to charge electric cars and access may be required.

Clerk to add the item to the next agenda.

2. Airband Broadband Presentation

The Clerk informs she received a message at 5.30pm from the Community Liaison Officer informing they would not be able to attend the meeting.

3. SSG Community Plan

Kate James, one of the leads within the Steering Group, presents the Community Plan to the PC.

KJ informs of the background of the plan explaining the SALC funding and CCS support to build a community plan.

KJ reports a huge amount of hard work went into the consultation, engagement, analysis and building of the community plan

KJ explains the processes that over the last 6 months, the steering group have consulted with the village in different ways and developed the plan based on the outcomes of the consultations. An identified key theme throughout was 'community cohesion' and for that reason the plan has now been rebranded as the Stoke St Gregory 2023 Community Plan.

KJ explains the plan identifies where we are as a community, where we want to be and how to get there. The steering group would now like the PC to adopt the plan in its current form and commit to delivering it. KJ requests the PC and the community need to take action and work together to 'take the words off the paper' and deliver the results the community desire.

The actions and prioritisations are set out within the plan. These should be reviewed quarterly to evaluate how the plan is progressing and being delivered, with the plan being reviewed every two years.

KJ informs the steering group in its current form will now be disbanded and recommends a Community group is set up to assist with the plan's deliverance.

JP thanks KJ and all of the members of the steering group for the considerable amount of hard work which has gone into its development and publication of such a professional document.

HV states it will take a lot of input from the whole community to deliver the outcomes and asks how the PC can facilitate and engage with the community to drive the plan forward. HV expresses concern in finding the people with the time to deliver the plan as this will be critical.

IU responds the plan is the vision of the community to work towards – the plan in its current form is the first step of a long journey. The PC should develop, drive, and support the plan by using the SMART goals within the plan. The community plan is a way for the PC to engage better with the community. IU suggests the PC consider a walk-in surgery each month to enable the community to engage with the PC.

DJ informs when the plan is reviewed, it needs to engage more than the initial 385 members of the community who responded, people came to the consultation with scepticism, but it is now a tangible piece of work the PC need to deliver. The outcomes of the next two years will be very important.

JP suggests that as each Parish Councillor has a different interest within the village, these can be utilised for each Parish Councillor to help focus on different aspects of delivering the actions of the plan.

DJ informs the plan has taken a huge amount of work from the steering group to build and each member of the PC has a responsibility to commit to delivering the plan and decide whether they have the time to help to deliver the plan.

JP proposes the Stoke St Gregory 2023 Community Plan is adopted formerly by the PC; IU seconds the motion; all in favour. MOTION CARRIED.

Clerk to add the item as a priority item for future agendas.

The Stoke St Gregory 2023 Community Plan is now on the village website at <https://www.stokestgregory.org/stoke-st-gregory-community-plan-2023/> on Facebook and hard copies are available throughout the village including the shop/café, pub, village hall and churches. If you do not have access to the plan and would like to obtain a hard copy, please contact the Clerk or any Parish Councillor who will happily supply a copy.

4. Planning

36/23/0007 Willments Farm, Stoke St Gregory – Demolition of timber framed agricultural storage building with associated works

The Parish Council agree the following response;

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support this planning application with no objections.”

36/23/0008 Uphams Barn, Griggs Hill, Stoke St Gregory – Variation to condition No18 of application 36/07/0015 as the dwellings are no longer required for persons employed at the Willow & Wetland Centre

The Parish Council agree the following response;

“Stoke St Gregory Parish Council support this planning application with no objections”.

5. Village Website

DJ informs one of the most important functions of the website is keeping information current, up to date and relevant. HV suggests the Clerk sends a monthly email to village groups to try and get more input for the website to keep it up to date.

Clerk to set up a monthly mailing list to village groups as a reminder for information on local groups and events within the village.

6. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) update

JP reports there have now been 3 quotes obtained for the proposed Pétanque Court.

HV states her concerns about the location of the Pétanque Court at the village hall, especially in light of recent anti-social behaviour at the car park. HV questions how the equipment will be stored and accessed. HV reiterates that it must be accessible to all.

JP responds further thought is required on the finer details and recommends Beau Tar should be the contractor for the project.

A member of the public asks who will be responsible for administering the Pétanque Court.

JP responds the original application and proposal requires further discussion to define the details.

DJ suggests a letter to the planning department is written to apply for ancillary use and to evaluate whether planning permission is required. This should cost in the region of £60.00.

DJ to write to the planning department regarding planning permission and ancillary use.

JP to discuss the application further with the WI and VH.

7. Community Health and Wellbeing Hub proposal

Item deferred until after the proposal as been discussed at the PFMC meeting.

8. Anti-social behaviour at the Village Hall

This item was discussed during public question time.

9. Somerset Councillor Report

JP thanks Cllr. Cavill for the report circulated by Cllr. Fothergill.

Cllr. Cavill reports that vesting day of the unitary authority went really well, and the hard work really begins now bringing all of the separate units together to work for the benefit of the County. There is also work to be done to manage the current £24 million budget overspend.

Cllr. Cavill informs that any potholes, road defects and speeding (mentioned earlier in the meeting) should be reported via the Somerset Council website as this assists with building a stronger case for remedial action to be taken as a priority.

Cllr Cavill reports the Environment sub committee recently submitted a 2023-2033 plan for woodland and the environment. There are hopes this will provide 240 hectares per year of woodland to benefit the environment, local communities, and phosphate off-setting.

Cllr. Cavill offers best wishes for the implementation of the Community Plan and commends the finished document citing it will be useful for applying for central and external funding options for projects such as health and welfare and cycling routes and alike.

IU asks Cllr. Cavill for an update on LCNs (Local Community Networks).

Cllr. Cavill informs that LCNs are slow getting off the ground, but 18 areas have been set up with a budget of £300,000 allocated to building LCNs. A 'Proper Officer' will be appointed for each LCN with a meeting in the pipeline in the near future.

10. The Younger Generation project

Item deferred until after the proposal has been discussed at the PFMC meeting.

Please note – the new Title for the project will be Project Play

11. Emergency Incident and Response plan

JP thanks IU for all the hard work and progress made with compiling the plan.

IU reports its an ongoing project and hopes the first draft will be available in May. This draft will require reviewing and input from the PC ahead of external communications being made with resilient Somerset, neighbouring Parishes, and other PCs to seek independent views. IU informs the completed plan should be in place by August.

12. Warm Community Hub

JP reports this initiative has come to an organic end in its current form, but the committee are investigating how the model can be used to assist with local issues in the future.

13. Baptist Church grant application (deferred from February)

The Clerk reports the PC considered the CIL application for the conversion of the stables in February. The PC requested further information from the applicant, which was provided.

It is agreed unanimously that the CIL application was not successful on this occasion as other investment in infrastructure may be more commensurate to the community.

14. Transfer of the allotments

The Clerk informs the outstanding planning application may be contributing to the delay. A response was received from the site manager of Broomfield Park who agreed they would look into the matter. Cllr. Cavill offers to contact the developer for an update.

15. Kings Coronation

JP informs an itinerary and posters are being published. JP thanks everyone who has contributed to the fete and offered to help on the day.

16. APM – Annual Parish Meeting

A discussion ensues on the content of the meeting which will be on **22nd May 2023 at 7.30pm at The Williams Hall**. It is agreed the meeting will include a presentation on the Community Plan and an opportunity for the community to discuss the plan with the PC. This will be followed by a drink and a chance to talk to the Parish Councillors.

17. Broomfield Park

HV reports the road markings and lines have now been painted.

18. Highways

IU reports he has spoken to the owner of the old bakery regarding displaying small signs on stakes to request vehicles do not park on the bend from the square to Willey Road or over the fire hydrant for the public safety reasons. DJ expresses concern over the inappropriate and inconsiderate use of the bay outside of the Royal Oak, instead of using the car park.

IU informs he has been reporting potholes directly to the Somerset Council website and there has been a positive response with the number of defects being filled.

19. Footpaths

JP informs that since T25/25 was reported, there has been no further update.

IU agrees to walk the footpath once the weather improves to assess the right of way and obtain the co-ordinates of any issues.

20. Stoke Environment Group Update

JP thanks IU for the written update circulated to the PC ahead of the meeting. A huge amount of work is going into the upcoming Envirofair on **Saturday 3rd June from 10am-4pm at The Williams Hall**. JP praises the recent bulb planting project within the village by the SEG with plants now visibly growing.

IU informs the SEG are currently also refurbishing the bench on the bottom of Dark Lane using the CIL monies allocated to the group for the benefit of the community.

21. Community Woodland Proposal

IU reports he is still in discussions with land agents, but the process is slow and frustrating to find a piece of land that can be used.

IU reports work is underway with Somerset Botany Group, Environmental Church Council, and the wildlife trust to map the Parish in terms of wildlife habitats. IU informs Stoke St Gregory has very little woodland within the Parish, with the County being one of the worst in the UK for woodland depletion. IU explains an area of 2 acres would be sufficient to provide a worthwhile community woodland.

22. The Green Charter

JP informs a Green Charter which is specific to the community has been circulated by IU.

IU informs The Green Charter could be adopted and incorporated into the Community Plan environment and tackling the climate crisis actions.

JP proposes the Green Charter developed by IU is adopted by the PC as a working document, all in favour; MOTION CARRIED.

The Green Charter can be viewed on the village website at <https://www.stokestgregory.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SSG-Green-Charter-Apr-23.pdf>

23. Playing Fields

Item deferred until after the PFMC meeting

24. Floods

PF reports there are still issues with surface water and blocked drains along and down Woodhill. IU agrees citing the current water flow and surface water will inevitably lead to more road and verge damage. JH suggests the issue may be more than emptying gullies and may be a blockages in the pipes.

Clerk to enquire with Somerset Council and Wessex Water regarding drain blockages.

PH reports there are also significant issues at the pumping station of pot holes, obstructions, and surface water.

Clerk to report to Wessex Water

25. Heart of the Village

AM suggests requesting a representative of the HOTV attend a PC meeting to offer an update on the community asset. IU agrees citing the PC should be kept informed on the community venture and should work with the HOTV in a supportive and co-operative way.

26. Consultations and surveys

None received

27. Financial matters

Standing Orders

01-04-23 K de Silva – Clerks Salary for March (29 Hours)	£395.85
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Payments to be authorised

D James - Reimbursement for village plan purchase	£28.50
D James - Printing costs for village plan	£260.19

N Sloan - website administration	£120.00
I Upshall - Re-imburement for Climathon community rep attendance (authorised in March - awaiting payment details	£25.00
Williams Hall - Hall hire for meetings	£45.00
The Cumbrian Clock Co - New spring for Parish clock	£510.00
G Wagen & James - Strim / Mow burial ground	£42.00
J Williams – Strimming and mowing	£100.00

Payments Received

DJ MJ & PW House Dykes Farm - Newsletter sponsorship	£74.00
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Other financial items

None.

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

28. Other items for discussion

The Clerk asks if the whereabouts of the broken fingerpost are known. PH responds it has disappeared but was broken beyond repair.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was closed at 9.25pm

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory on Monday 15th 2023 at 7.30pm. The APCM will commence at 7.30pm with the full PC meeting commencing immediately afterwards.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be on Monday 22nd May at 7.30pm at The Williams Hall. An agenda will be published shortly. All are welcome and will finish with a drink and a chance to speak to the Parish Councillors.