

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 11th September 2023 in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.

Present – Janice Pearce (Chair), Anne Merritt (Vice-Chair), John Hembrow, Heather Venn, Ann Finn, Cllr. David Fothergill (Somerset Councillor)

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

93. Apologies for absence – Peter House, David Cuthbertson

Approve and sign the minutes of the July meeting – The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and signed accordingly.

Interests and dispensations –None.

Public Question Time – A member of the Footpath Group (SE) is present to offer an update.

SE informs the County Footpath Officer has 57 Parishes to cover as well as covering Exmoor due to staffing issues. Despite this, the group have developed a good working relationship and some great improvements, including the installation of gates, have been made.

SE reports that some farmers and landowners are assisting with the clearing of footpaths whereas others have not been as co-operative. SE informs the group have been strimming and clearing paths and thanks the PC for the equipment purchased.

SE reports there are some issues with walkers leaving gates open – some of which are not on public Rights of Way causing additional issues for some Farmers.

SE is aware of the issues on the Polkesfield footpath and offers the assistance of the group.

AM offers a brief on the current issues with overgrowth and fly tipping along the path. A discussion ensues on landownership and how the issue can be resolved effectively.

The lead of the SEG (IU) is present and would like to raise an issue with the minutes of the previous meeting. IU would like to clarify within the minutes that the July that a comment was made by JP that the SEG was set up by the PC. This was not the case; the Forward Strategy Group was started by the Parish Council with the SEG being developed independently of this once a few other people got together and as a point of accuracy would like to make it known that the SEG and has never been attached to the PC.

IU would also like to raise that in the minutes of the previous meeting when JP said, “from a personal point of view the Community Plan was politically motivated by the Local Authority.” IU respects your point of view but as the minutes have been signed as correct, he would like to challenge this as being factually correct.

JH informs the minutes are written, agreed, and signed as an accurate record of what was said in the meeting.

IU asks what the basis for this comment was. JP responds explaining the reasoning behind the comment based on attendance to a LCN (Local Community Network) meeting some time ago which there was a strong emphasis on the reliance on the volunteer sector and the importance of having a community plan to assist with funding applications and alike to the Unitary Local Authority. JP commends the work of the community in the achievements that have already been seen by people working together and volunteering.

94. Planning

36/23/0021 Crossways Farm, Slough Lane, Stoke St Gregory - Variations of Conditions No's 02 (approved plans), 04 (landscaping), 05 (external lighting) and 11(land contamination) with removal of conditions No's 3 (external materials), 06 (pre-demolition ecologist survey), 07 (vegetation removal), 08 (land contamination) and 10 (water efficiency measures) of application 36/21/0017.

Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agree to support this application.

36/23/0019 Meare Green Farm. Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory - Enclosure of agricultural building.

Stoke St Gregory Parish Council agree to support this application.

36/23/0016 Pine House. Curload, Stoke St Gregory - Demolition and replacement of outbuildings.
DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 27.07.23

36/23/0014 Dene Cottage, Stoke Road, Meare Green, Stoke St Gregory - Erection of a single storey wrap around extension to the side and rear
DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 06.07.23

Sturts Barn. Huntham Lane, Stoke St Gregory - Conversion of attached store building to annexe accommodation
DECISION - CONDITIONAL APPROVAL 11.08.23

95. Co-option for Casual Vacancies for 3 Parish Councillors

JP informs 3 candidates have submitted applications for the 3 Casual Vacancies on the Parish Council.

JP asks the members of the public to leave the room whilst the personal attributes of the candidates is discussed by the PC.

The public are invited back to the meeting. Two of the candidates are present with one offering apologies before the meeting.

Each candidate is invited to introduce themselves to the council. JP reads the application form of the third candidate.

HV proposes that all three candidates are appointed for the vacancies on the PC. JH Seconds the motion – all in favour. MOTION CARRIED.

Cllr. John Hardy and Cllr. Lawrence Bostock are asked to join the meeting as they were sent the agenda ahead of the meeting. Cllr. David Cuthbertson is appointed in his absence. Both present Councillors sign their Declarations of Office and join the meeting.

96. Stoke St Gregory 2023 Community Plan

A member of the Community Plan Delivery Group (IU) informs the PC of the work done to simplify the tracker and make it a more digestible tool that people can work and engage with.

IU informs no input has been received from other groups other than the SEG and encourages other groups to engage and get on board to deliver the plan.

IU asks the PC to lead and drive the plan moving forward and welcomes input.

A discussion ensues on the work involved for all village groups which are all run by volunteers offering as much spare time as they can and all of which are working on maintaining the current facilities, projects, fundraising, and working together.

JP suggests more could be done to engage the younger people of the community to join the local committees and groups to move the village forward.

A member of the Community Plan Delivery Group (KJ) informs of the tracker and how the objective of the tool is to communicate and engage; to facilitate action rather than to be used as a scoring tool.

KJ informs that communication and engagement needs to be improved. KJ refers to footpath work happening, suggesting that this is not communicated effectively. HV notes this is included in the minutes to which KJ states that no one reads the minutes and other tools should be considered.

A discussion ensues on the requirement of better means of communication and which age groups to target. This includes the completion of the tracker to keep people more informed of ongoing work. KJ informs other Parishes have developed their own trackers to monitor progress.

A discussion continues on what the Parish Council do in the day-to-day business of the Council and how the plan and the data is already being utilised and how this should be communicated more effectively.

A representative of the Community delivery plan requests the PC to lead on issues with farming within the village as this causes a divide within the community. JP informs cohesion and working together will be focused on moving forward now a full complement of Councillors has been achieved and the replacement of the Clerk has been appointed.

Discuss and agree a response to the open letter sent by the Community Plan Delivery Team

A discussion ensues between the Community Delivery Plan representatives and Parish Councillors on the content of a “open letter” received by the PC.

HV feels the content of the letter is a significant criticism of the engagement and communications of the PC and explains ways in which the PC do engage and communicate.

A heated discussion ensues on engagement with the Community Plan Delivery Team requesting more engagement particularly with the Community plan and not just having a reactive response.

It is decided that no response will be offered and moving forward, being on board and together will be the best way forward.

Noticeboard

A discussion centres on the state of the noticeboard, location, and content. Different locations are discussed such as the Playing Field entrance, at the HOTV as well as other areas.

AM to consult the community via social media for input on possible locations and content for communications.

97. Project Play

JP reports the lead of the Project Play has offered an update today by email. Funding is being sourced and the interactive numuga design is available to view.

AM informs plans are underway for a fundraising event for the project on November 25th – more information on this will be available shortly. If you are able to offer any help to the event, please contact Anne Meritt directly.

The PC offers to continue full support with the project.

98. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

Petanque Court Update

JP reports the opening of the Petanque Court was a very successful event and thanks all that were involved. The dispensing of the equipment still requires further thought but equipment is available on request from JP.

PFCM Proposals for funding, equipment, and CCTV

JP informs the PFCM have put the CIL application on hold at the moment until a rep visits the site and grant funding has been considered in more depth.

CIL Application from the Willowset

JP informs a CIL application was received from the Willowset for £12,500.00 for the purchase of equipment for the children.

A discussion ensues on whether the application would comply with the CIL regulations required for spend justification. It is agreed that The Willowset is a valued organisation within the community and should be supported. AM proposes a grant is considered from the PC grant budget to the Willowset to

assist with the purchasing of new equipment for the Willowset such as bikes, trikes interactive boards and activities.

The PC discuss the financial position of the PC and the grant allocation budget.

AM proposes a £1000.00 grant is given to the Willowset for the purchasing of new equipment required. HV seconds the motion, all in favour. MOTION CARRIED.

99. Vacancy for a Parish Clerk

The Clerk informs interviews will take place on Wednesday. The interview panel is agreed.

The transition from one Clerk to another is discussed with the current Clerk planning to finish at the end of October.

JP would like it recorded that the PC are extremely grateful to the current Clerk for staying in the role through a lengthy notice period and acknowledge this has been difficult due to the full-time work and family commitments of the Clerk over the last 6 months.

100. Anti-social behaviour

AM reports that a pile of rubble has appeared at Polkesfield. It is agreed that this should be reported to the Local Authority for removal.

AM requests that fly tipping posters are requested from the Local Authority to deter fly tipping.

101. Somerset Councillor Report

DF offers an overview of the Somerset Council finances reporting that the current overspend for this year is an estimated £26million. So far £4 million has been saved through moving to a unitary authority but there will be hard decisions to be made to make the required savings.

Covid vaccines are now available for the elderly with the roll out of flu vaccines expected in the middle of October.

Single use plastics will be phased out from 1st October. DF informs of a project in Frome which collected 4 tonnes of soft plastic demonstrating a need for these to be recycled by the SWP in the future.

The flat fare of £2 for bus travel is ongoing in an effort to get more people using the buses.

102. Emergency and Incident Response Plan

The PC discuss options for roles and responsibilities for inclusion in the plan. Ideas of people who could be responsible for designated areas is discussed.

It is noted the fantastic job that has been done by IU on the plan.

It is suggested that an Information Officer lead is appointed to implement the plan in an emergency until the first responders arrived at any incident.

JP plans to attend a Resilience training event in Wincanton on 5th October.

103. Broomfield Park

Nothing to report.

104. Highways

SID/VAW Update

There has been very little success with securing funding through the Somerset and Avon police scheme and the Clerk suggests that CIL could be considered for the purchase of a SID.

DF suggests contacting the TMO (Traffic Management Officer) to discuss suitable locations and the purchasing process.

AF reports the Speedwatch has been active on two occasions in the last month and reports 10% of traffic was traveling above the speed limit.

Parking in the Village Square

JP reports that the school and Willowset have been contacted to raise the continued issues with inconsiderate parking and requests have been made for teachers and staff not to park on the roads but use the car parks within the village.

JP has contacted the HOTV regarding parking in the square by patrons. The HOTV has informed it will put up signs to request the car park is used.

105. Footpaths

This item was discussed during the public question time.

106. Stoke Environment Group

JP thanks the lead of the SEG for the submission of the monthly report.

IU reports that work is still ongoing to find a suitable area for a community woodland.

Trees for Broomfield Park

J Hardy reports the residents of Broomfield Park are in discussion with the land agents and management company regarding the replacement of trees on Broomfield Park.

107. Community Woodland

Ongoing plans being developed by the SEG.

108. Playing Fields

Deferred

109. HOTV

Nothing to report.

110. Consultations and Surveys

Nothing to report.

111. Financial Matters

Standing Orders

01-08-23 K de Silva – Clerks Salary for July	£395.85
01-09-23 K de Silva - Clerks Salary for August	£395.85

Payments to be authorised

01-07-23 J Williams - Strimming and mowing	£100.00
01-08-23 J Williams - Strimming and mowing	£100.00
14-08-23 The Clover Press - Printing of the Community Plan newsletter	£74.14
01-08-23 N Sloan - Web administration (July)	£120.00
01-09-23 N Sloan - Web administration (August)	£120.00
18-04-23 G Wagen & James - Outstanding invoice from April	£46.20
19-07-23 G Wagen & James - Burial Ground (June)	£92.40
21-08-23 G Wagen & James - Burial Ground (July)	£92.40
30-07-23 The WI - payment for the Petanque Court (Cheque)	£ 2,600.00

Payments Received

None

Other financial items

None.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was closed at 9.50pm

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Monday 9th October at 7.30pm in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.