

STOKE ST. GREGORY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8th January 2024 in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.

Present – Janice Pearce (Chair), Heather Venn, Peter House, Lawrence Bostock, John Hardy, John Hembrow, Ann Finn, Cllr. David Fothergill (Somerset Councillor)

In Attendance – Sally Taylor (Clerk) and one member of the public

Apologies – David Cuthbertson

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

178. Interests and dispensations; None

179. Public Question Time –

Danny James was in attendance to give an update on Project Play.

He has presented to the Playing Field Committee the final design for the entire area. Presented also to School assembly and the children are all very excited.

A different material is now part of the design which has resulted in a significantly lower cost. There is only one quote for the equipment as there is only one supplier. The quote for the 19 pieces is £49869 and there is no VAT. There are separate quotes for the bike stands, the planters and the installation, giving a total cost for the project of £96805 (original projection £130k)

DJ has had a positive conversation with the National Lottery. The project hits the criteria for many grants (15 funds are currently on the list) and he is getting advice from Sparks.

Discussions took place around where the £30k should sit – with the PC or the PFC, and the question of providing bank statements and bank details to Grant providers. ST had sought the advice of SALC, who said that the bank details should be provided for the destination account for the grants – that they are not necessarily looking at large bank balances. The PF will need to insure the project and take ownership of it, therefore that is where any grant monies should be paid to.

The issue of the PF not being able to reclaim VAT may be overcome by the Groundworks element of the project (which is around £30K) being paid for by the PC and the equipment which does not attract VAT being paid by the PF.

In conclusion, JP is to write an open letter of support which will be provided to the Grant providers if requested which will confirm the amount of CIL money ringfenced for Project Play which is held in the accounts of the PC.

ST to check the deadline for spending the CIL monies

180. Planning

36/23/0025 Erection of 1 no dwelling with driveway and associated works on land off Woodhill, Stoke St Gregory. **PLANNING REFUSED**

36/23/0030 Application for Certificate of Lawful Development for existing siting of three residential caravans at Meare Green Farm, Frog Lane

JH stated that a Certificate of Lawful use is a legal interpretation. The PC does not want to get involved in legalities, but consider have these dwellings affected anyone, affected traffic, both no. They have been in situ for around 10 years and the question would be have they been in continuous use for those 10 years and this can't be answered or proved. Discussions followed around the potential future use and impact, but this is not what is being asked at this stage.

All agreed to a reply of 'No Comment and no wish to pursue further'

181. Vacancy for Vice Chair

JP advised the PC that Anne Merritt had stepped down as a Councillor and therefore as Vice Chair. A new Councillor will need to be co-opted on to the Council, and this needs to be advertised.

ST to look at adverts put out by other PCs as examples. All Councillors to look to canvass for new applicants.

DF confirmed that next elections are in 2027. He also confirmed that other PCs have Chair in place for one year and then replaced. If SSG were to consider this the Standing Orders may need to be amended.

A Vice Chair must be appointed. After discussion John Hardy was persuaded to take this role on, until May in the first instance. Proposed by JHe, seconded by HV and all were in favour.

182. Stoke St Gregory 2023 Community Plan

The drop in surgery for the public to meet with a Councillor for updates/questions took place on Saturday 16th December from 10am – 12pm. Although there was a good footfall, the majority of this was for the HOTV open morning. The issues arising from those who did speak to JP were:

Tractors speeding on Woodhill

Parking in the Square and surrounds.

Village Hall may not be accessible to the elderly as the approach to it is so dark. PH to check if lighting is working correctly.

30 mph signage along Meare Green not clear. Speed Indication Device has been discussed previously, and now the costs for the installation of the 30mph zone has come in under budget there is money available to enhance the effectiveness of the reduction in maximum speed.

Highways will need to approve and advise on the best location. AF to make contact with Kate Brown to progress.

Next drop in session 9th March 2024. Volunteer (s) needed to man this. Need a sign to make it clear that it is a PC drop in. Community Plan logo to be used, LB to print sign.

Replacement noticeboard, construction in progress. Replacement is necessary due to deterioration of current board making it difficult to use. New board will be large enough to display the CP.

Bus Shelter damage at Woodhill discussed. Broken glass has now all been cleared. JP to approach SEG to see if they are in a position to take on the repairs, money is available in the current years PC budget.

183. Project Play

Already covered under minute 179.

184. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

Petanque Court: Needs to have an identity after a vehicle was parked on it over new year when the whole Hall was booked out. It is not obvious what it is. JP to take up with WI.

The agreement to fund the bid from HOTV has been questioned. The PC are all in agreement that this project will benefit the elderly and/or disabled residents, allowing them access to a facility they are unable to enjoy at present. It is not seen as supporting a business application, but it does support Item 1 in the Health and Wellbeing section of the Community Plan.

185. Anti-social behaviour

There have been some new incidences. Noticeboards at Village Hall and the shop, and the shattered glass at the Woodhill Terrace bus shelter has given way. Bus Shelter damage at Woodhill discussed, broken glass has now all been cleared. JP to approach SEG to see if they are in a position to take on the repairs, money is available in the current years PC budget.

Also reports of turkey carcasses at Playing Field.

CCTV has now been installed at the Village Hall.

186.Somerset Councillor Report

Report from DF is [attached](#).

187. Emergency and Incident Response Plan

JP identified the need to appoint an Information Officer for radio/social media/updates. Needs someone with an eye for detail. PH was suggested, but he is not keen on the comms (social media) aspect. HV offered to deal with that part of the role.

The need to have specified persons to 'round people up' in case of emergency was discussed and names suggested for different roads in the Village. JP will collate this and circulate for agreement.

188. Broomfield Park

Nothing further to report.

189. Highways

E mail received from Highways re deterioration of 30 roundels at Curload. Kate Brown will visit to inspect and order replacements in April if required. ST to contact KB to request she checks Meare Green when she is in the Village.

JP had received an e mail regarding maintenance of hedge by School House and School Field. JP has reported to Highways.

All agreed that it the hedge belongs to the School and therefore they are responsible for maintenance.

190. Footpaths

Footpath by allotments: ST to check deeds to show ownership of hedge, also to ask GG. If the PC are responsible then the PC will pay whoever cuts it.

191. Stoke Environment Group

No update.

All agreed the work on the bus shelter is excellent.

JP has agreed to have a stand for a Surgery at the Envirofair in June.

192. Defibrillators

AF advised that the bid for a defibrillator from the BHF has been unsuccessful.

As there is money available in CIL it was agreed that a purchase of one unit should be made and installed at Coates.

The Dept of Health and Social Care scheme with match funding of approx. £750 will now be pursued for Curload, but we cannot apply until the site has been agreed. JP to speak to Danny and Kate again, if they are not able to offer to have it, the residents at The Old Stores will be asked. AF advised that there is a lead time of 16 weeks. The deadline for bids is September 2024 and therefore a site needs to be identified as a priority.

193. Flooding

JHe reported he has cleared the drains on Huntham Lane at the far end near Mike Hutchings home, and has put new mesh in front of drains. There has also been an issue at Broad Lane where the landowner has filled the ditch in. JHe will ask him to look at maintaining this.

194. Playing Fields

PH has looked at options for replacement bins. Three options were discussed.

All were in agreement to purchase the slatted style bin made from the recycled plastic. ST to arrange ordering.

195. HOTV

LB attending Community Hub on 15th January and will feed back. E mail received also to be circulated.

196. Parish Council Website

DF advised that West Monkton are looking to take up the Parish Online offer for a gov.uk compliant website. Other PCs may follow suit – keep under review.

153. Financial Matters

Standing Orders

Payments to be authorise

01-01-24 N Sloan - Website Admin	£120.00
15-12-23 Rockwell Print	£77.00
01-01-24 S Taylor Clerk Salary for December	£391.50
13-12-23 Josh Williams Hedge Cutting	£70.00
18-10-23 PKF Littlejohn LLP	£252.00

Payments approved. HV proposed, LB seconded

Budget/Precept: Proposals for 2024-25 budget were discussed. Deadline for submission noon on 2 February. It was agreed that expenditure should align with the precept, and that contingencies would be met from reserves. The PC need to mindful that cuts in Somerset Council services will make more of a demand on PC funds. This equates to an uplift to the precept of 7% which was proposed by JHe and seconded by LB. MOTION CARRIED.

This is shown in the table below:

Stoke St Gregory



		23/24	24/25	Increase/ (decrease)	
				amount	%
Tax					
Base		410.74	413.60	2.86	0.70%
Precept		19,550.00	20,919.00	1,369.00	7.00%
Band D					
amount		47.60	50.58	2.98	6.26%
A	6 / 9	31.73	33.72	1.99	6.26%
B	7 / 9	37.02	39.34	2.32	6.26%
C	8 / 9	42.31	44.96	2.65	6.26%
D	9 / 9	47.60	50.58	2.98	6.26%
E	11 / 9	58.17	61.82	3.64	6.26%
F	13 / 9	68.75	73.06	4.31	6.26%
G	15 / 9	79.33	84.30	4.97	6.26%
H	18 / 9	95.19	101.16	5.96	6.26%

154 Other items for discussion

A PC Safeguarding Policy was discussed. The conclusion was that as the PC is not running events itself that no such policy is required. Organisers of events the PC are involved with should be asked if they have insurance and their own safeguarding policy. All were in favour of this approach.

The meeting was closed at 9.55pm

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Monday 12th February at 7.30pm in the meeting room at The Williams Hall, Dark Lane, Stoke St Gregory.