

STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes from the meeting held on 17th October 2019

Present: Cllr Holder (Chair), Cllrs. Taylor, Corbett, Wolf, Hambly, McEntee, Richardson-Aitken, County Cllr Phillip Ham

Also, in attendance: Kate Egan (Clerk). There were 2 members of the public present.

1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Gibson and District Councillor Alan Townsend

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Hambly and Taylor in relation to item 8b, Cllr McEntee in relation to item 8a

3 Public Session

No items from members of the public

4 County and District Councillors Reports

County Report for October

Measles: Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications. Earlier this year the UK lost its measles free status due to the increased number of confirmed cases in the UK and evidence that transmissions of measles had been re-established. This increased number of cases is directly linked to the drop in the number of Children vaccinated, in particular the second dose of the MMR vaccination. Evidence has shown that cases of measles occur in communities where vaccine uptake is low. As measles is highly infectious, even small decline in uptake can have an impact, and anyone who has not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine is at risk. Those people who missed out on getting the vaccine are urged to make an appointment now to get vaccinated. For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles

School places: September saw the opening of applications for school places for 2020. The deadline for secondary school places is 31 October 2019 and for Primary school admissions the deadline is 15 January 2020. SCC encourage everyone to submit three preferences, including their local school as one of those preferences. In recent years, some applications have only included one preference for a non-local school and if demand is high for that single school, it can mean that students and parents have to wait longer for a confirmed placement at a different school, making the experience more stressful. www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/apply-to-start-school

New school openings: September saw two new schools open their doors in Taunton, the £8.5m Hazelbrook campus at Selworthy Special School and the new £7.3m Nerrols Primary school, creating 500 new school places. The state-of-the-art new campus at Selworthy will offer 80-100 places for secondary age pupils with a wide range of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. The development will help to ensure pupils can be educated close to their homes and communities, without needing to take long journeys to a school, which can accommodate their needs.

Libraries: Over 7,000 children visited libraries across Somerset to take part in 'Space Chase' - this year's national Summer Reading Challenge inspired by the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. Children signed up to read up to six books over the summer and received rewards for every book they read. During the holidays over 160,000 books were read in total and hundreds of children and families took part in free events held in their local libraries such as slime making, story times, 3D printing, Virtual reality, LEGO days, Nintendo Switch gaming events, and many more.

Costa Coffee Fostering Events: Over the next few weeks information events about Fostering opportunities are being held in Yeovil, Shepton Mallett and Bridgwater, kindly supported by Costa Coffee. More information can be found at www.fosteringinsomerset.gov.uk

Enterprise centres: Two business-boosting enterprise centres for Somerset have taken a leap forward with construction work now underway. Cathedral Park, Wells will offer two larger offices, ten smaller offices and two meeting rooms as well as five 50 square metre industrial units whilst the new, purpose-built Wiveliscombe centre will offer ten offices, two meeting rooms and seven industrial units. The aim is for both centres – which are each costing in the region of £2m – to be open next Spring, bringing the total number of centres in the Somerset network up to seven. All centres provide modern, accessible space for small and growing businesses – something that can be hard to find in rural areas. They offer flexible tenancies, superfast broadband, business networking, access to business support and competitive rents.

Gritting routes: As the County Council's financial position has now significantly improved SCC has confirmed it will make available an additional £200,000 for the highway winter service to fund additional routes and activities. The precautionary gritting network has been reviewed in line with the most up to date code of practice. This has resulted in an increase in the precautionary gritting network from approximately 720 miles to 900 miles of road which will be treated every time ice or snow is forecast. This is around 21 per cent of the total roads in Somerset – bringing it back to previous levels. SCC will be operating 23 gritting lorries, running out of five depots across the county.

Grit Bins: Parish council are being asked to check their grit bins and to let SCC know by 31st October if they need filling. This will assist with the continuing sustainability of this service by targeting visits by the road maintenance teams to only those locations in need. One tonne dumpy bags of salt are sometimes provided on steep slopes, especially on Exmoor and the Mendips, and this will continue to be the case. If Parish/Town Councils have any questions regarding the provision of roadside salt please contact the area highways office. The parish/town council salt bag collection day which has taken place for a number of years up until last winter was also reviewed. The conclusion was that on recent occasions the take up of this service was generally low and it did not provide good value for money.

Opposite Sex Civil Partnerships: Somerset's Registration Service is ready and waiting for couples wishing to tie the knot through a new 'opposite sex civil partnership' next year. The service would like to hear from couples interested in booking a ceremony in 2020 following the change of Government legislation which will make civil partnerships available to opposite as well as same sex couples. Somerset Registration Service has a large team of professional celebrants who will tailor ceremonies to suit each couple's preferences at over 120 licensed venues. Contact Somerset Registration Service via somersetregistrations@somerset.gov.uk

Cllr Ham read out a brief report stating that the Interim Notes had been issued regarding the Local Plan II and new and bigger developments may be built in the area. Climate Change is a major issue with Mendip District Council, lots of meetings are being arranged on how to tackle the problem and the aim is to have zero carbon. This subject is becoming rather big and is continually in the news and media. The Car Parking Strategy has been restarted. The Old Wells Road Scheme will hopefully be implemented in the Spring. Beacon Crossroads is still at the discussion stage and will be very expensive for Somerset County Council to implement, but there are talks being held regarding match funding, alternatives are also being looked at. Hinkley Point is currently running on budget and on time, completion is due for 2025. A Members Improving Lives Fund from Somerset County Council is available and a grant can be applied for between £500 and £1000. This was discussed further under item 9b.

Report from District Councillor Townsend

Stoke Bottom – Cllr Townsend has chased up Charlie Higgins on the Penny's agreement to make good the eroded verges. Charlie Higgins had another meeting with them last week and they confirmed they will get on with, Cllr Townsend will keep harassing him on this. Cllr Townsend has also raised with him the urgent need for repair of two potholes on the bridge, these are deep and sharp and hidden from view as they are generally filled with water.

Whitehole Lane – All neighbouring Parishes agree that a ban on HGVs would be counter productive so maintaining the status quo is the lesser of the evils. Cllr Townsend has asked for reflectors on the new wooden bridge parapet

Mill Lane – Cllr Townsend has asked Sara Davis of Somerset Highways at Taunton to come up and see the problem first hand.

5 Minutes of Previous Meeting held 5th September 2019

Minutes from the meeting were agreed and signed by the Chair

Minutes from Previous Meetings held on 26th September 2019

Minutes from the meeting were agreed and signed by the Chair

6 **Matters arising from previous minutes which do not appear on this Agenda**

Council Emails – This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting

Action: Cllr McEntee

Repair of Bus Stop – Willmots have not yet been contacted about the repair and replacing the pane of glass, details of the accident are yet to be received from the witnesses, these will be chased...

Action: Cllr Holder

7 **Note the responses in respect of the following planning applications –**

(a) **Enforcement Enquiry at Batch Farm, Limekiln Lane regarding the Tennis Court fencing** – Tennis Courts are allowed under Permitted Development but there was a query as to whether the fencing was above two meters and then a Planning Application would be required. Following email and telephone conversations, the Planning Officer attended site and didn't feel that the fencing was above two meters and falls within the parameters of Permitted Development. However, he was unable to say for sure so he will arrange a revisit and measure the fencing around the tennis courts. The Permitted Development concept was queried by a Councillor as the property is listed and within a conservation area. The Planning Department at Mendip District Council will be contacted for clarification.

Action: Clerk

(b) **2018/2334/FUL Enforcement Enquiry for Barn Farm, Tadhil Land –**

An enforcement notice has been issued for the removal of the caravans and portacabin – ENF/2019/0193. If the caravans are not removed by 5th November, the enforcement team will be notified

Action: Cllr Taylor

(c) **Planning Appeal for the building behind Central Stores has been allowed.**

8 **Grants to Village Organisations**

(a) **War Memorial Hall – To receive and oral request for a grant in the sum of £1600.**

The War Memorial Hall Committee have fundraised to refurbish the hall and gentlemen's toilet which has been updated by replacing the cistern and replaced the floor. The cinema is nearly completed and the sound system is waiting to be installed. More comfortable chairs have also been purchased. The interior work is still ongoing. Money for these improvements was raised from outside grants and other organisations. The guttering needs replacing as it needs to be deeper as at the moment water overflows so causing damp problems. Quotes were received from various companies and a grant was requested for £1600 to replace the guttering, cover the fascia boards with PVC and repair the soffit. Questions were raised from the councillors in regard to the longevity of PVC guttering and the general appearance on the outside of the building. The request was for quotes on metal guttering instead of PVC, this was proposed by Cllr Wolf and seconded by Cllr Taylor. This will be brought back to the next meeting.

(b) Playing Fields – To receive a request for a grant in the sum of £1000.

Over the last year the Parish Council have provided grant aid support totalling £5250 to the Management Committee of the Community Field to support the annual running costs and address the essential maintenance items identified in the 2018 play area safety inspection. The majority of this work has been completed or is being progressed.

In early summer, the 2019 safety inspections took place and for the first time were extended to include the skate area, the old tennis court and the rebound wall. These inspections have identified new issues, particularly in relation to the skate area and the tennis court.

The Management Committee are looking at longer-term development plans for the Community Field as a whole, potentially taking in the redevelopment of the tennis court area. Funding opportunities to enable this are being explored from various external sources.

In the meantime, action has been recommended to restrict access to the tennis court which has been identified as presenting a high risk for trips and falls. Options are still being investigated as to how this can be achieved in a cost effective manner.

More urgently, immediate work is recommended to make safe the existing well-used equipment in the skate and play areas. The funding request only relates to those items.

Three issues have been identified that require immediate attention. If not addressed they might result in closure or removal of the items in question. It should be noted that these issues were all pre-existing at the time management responsibility was re-established with the charity.

Previous work of this nature has been undertaken by engineers from John Wainwright. Unfortunately, Wainwrights no longer employ these engineers directly. External contractors would need to be brought in at an estimated cost of £1000.

Without an income stream, the Management Committee is not currently in a position to progress the work.

A further grant of £1000 is therefore requested prior to further quotations being sought.

Cllr Wolf proposed that the Parish Council support the application and Cllr McEntee seconded. Payment will be issued at the November meeting.

- 9 **Dropped Kerbs – the possibility of dropped kerbs for disable access.**
There are not many kerbs in the village and the areas where this might provide benefit have no pavements. The Councillors were trying to find areas and decided that there was no real need for it.
- 10 **Millennium Wood**
(a) **Feedback from Forest School Event** – It was well attended by the village, about 30 children came and lots of adults. There were some new visitors to the wood who were unaware of the existence, and new attendees to village events. Feedback from the village was positive and as a result more people could become involved in running the wood. This event could possibly become an annual event or even hold one in the Spring. A Facebook page is going to be created so news and events can be published. A Working Party day has been arranged for January 2020 and this could broaden into a social event, the work needing to be carried out includes work to the trees and clearing paths. Somerset County Council provide a grant called “Members Improving Lives Fund” which is available through the County Councillor. The working party will put together a shopping list and apply for the grant.
Action: Cllr Taylor
- (b) **Legal advice in respect of options for managing the wood** – A possible solution would be to create a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). This is an organisation with charitable objects which has some similarities to a Company limited by Guarantee. It is a legal entity in its own right as a result of which it can own property and assets in its own name. Because a CIO has a separate legal identity a Parish Council as local authority can lease property to a CIO. This would enable the new organisation to seek grants aid from a wider base. The lease would also be at a peppercorn rent. Further information needs to be researched, so this will be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion.
- 11 **New Noticeboard** – Brand new noticeboards are in the region of £1,600 to £2,000, but after further investigation the back board is fine and it is in keeping with the Lychgate, so local carpenters will be contacted to obtain quotes just to replace the door with double doors that can be locked. This will be brought back to the next meeting.
Action: Cllr Taylor
- 12 **Mill Lane – ongoing complaints** – The issue is still ongoing and being monitored. Further signage was discussed. Somerset Highways will visit the site to see the problems for themselves.
- 13 **Confirm dates of future meetings until 2020** – There was some discussion about dates in May and in particular whether to widen the scope of the Annual Parish Meeting into a more social event, and the agenda for the Annual Parish Council meeting and whether they could be run on the same evening. More information will be researched and this item will be put on the next agenda.
- 14 **Resolution to dispose of the PC Printer currently held** – Cllr Taylor proposed that the old Parish Council can be disposed of, this was seconded by Cllr Hambly.

- 15 **Policies – To consider and adopt updated documents: -**
- (a) **Standing Order** – Amendments were discussed. These will be incorporated into the draft and will be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion/adoption.
 - (b) **Financial Regulations** – Amendments were discussed. These will be incorporated into the draft and brought back to the next meeting for further discussion/adoption.
 - (c) **Code of Conduct** – Adopted by the Council, proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr Hambly.
- 16 **Report from external auditors for the AGAR 2018/19**
The external auditors reported “On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.”
- 17 **Finance**
- a) Cash Book – reviewed and noted by Members
 - b) Budget – The budget was reviewed and forecast had predicted about correctly
 - c) Account Balances – Current Account £30,749.25
Reserve Account £50.47
 - d) Payments: -
 - Clerks salary for September and expenses – £336.94
(expenses include purchase of the flag, book of condolence and stamps)
 - Fae Clements – four invoices - £79.00
 - PKF Littlejohn - £240.00
 - Deeper Green – £100.00
 - Glasdon UK Ltd - £126.79
- All cheques were agreed and signed by Cllr Holder and Cllr McEntee
- 18 **Correspondence**
- (a) Invitation to the SALC AGM on Saturday 26th October
 - (b) Cllr Hambly attended the recent Quarry liaison meeting and read a brief report. Noise complaints that were received to the quarry from parishioners is being addressed, the various tips are now up and running, there has been a change of personnel and an offer of help has been received for the Millennium Wood.
- 19 **Matters to report / Items for next agenda**
- (a) Briefing note providing clarity on the requirements for the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting.
 - (b) Re-drafted Standing Orders
 - (c) Re-drafted Financial Regulations

20 **Date and time of next meeting 28th November starting at 19.30hrs in the War Memorial Hall.**

The meeting concluded at 10.20pm