

STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes from the virtual meeting held on 7th January 2021

Present: Cllr Keith Holder (Chair), Cllrs. Amanda Taylor, Keith Hambly, David Richardson-Aitken, Kim Gibson, John McEntee, Matthew Rice and Nicholas Corbett.

Also, in attendance: Kate Egan (Clerk).

1. **Welcome by the Chairman**

2. **Apologies for absence**

None received

3. **Absent**

No Councillors were absent

4. **Declarations of Interest**

None

5. **Public session**

There were no members of the public in attendance

6. **County and District Councillor Reports**

County Cllr Phillip Ham and District Councillor Alan Townsend were in attendance.

Cllr Phillip Ham briefly went through the monthly report which is included in appendix A.

Cllr Alan Townsend read through his District report which is included in appendix B.

Cllr Alan Townsend will speak to Mendip District Council regarding the short timescale and lack of publicity regarding the Planning Consultation as mentioned in item 15d.

There was a discussion with reference to the slowness of planning applications being approved or refused and a temporary ban on housing applications where there are excess phosphates as mentioned in the last minutes. Other applications are carrying on as normal but slowly. If the Planning Inspector agrees the modifications the draft Local Plan II should be issued at the of January.

7. **To confirm the minutes of the previous meetings held on 26th November 2020, previously circulated**

The Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes for 26th November be accepted as a true record and would be signed by the Chair once physical meetings are resumed.

8. **Matters arising from the minutes but not on the agenda**

There were no matters arising

9. Grants

(a) Memorial Hall – Possible Application for a grant to help with the costs of running the freezers for storing food.

No application has been received; this will be deferred until a request has been made to the Parish Council

(b) Stoke St Michael Hardship Fund – As agreed at last meeting a sum of £300 was earmarked for a grant, the application has now been received and a cheque will be issued.

(c) Memorial Hall – Application for a grant to pay for new flooring within the hall totalling £3156.00

The Chair of the Memorial Hall Committee joined by telephone and spoke about the application and the current refurbishment plans for the hall. Questions were raised by the Councillors and these were answered. The Council **RESOLVED** to pay the full amount requested. Proposed by Cllr Nicholas Corbett, seconded by Cllr Amanda Taylor and unanimously agreed.

10. Policies

(a) Annual Approval of Parish Council Asset List

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Parish Council Asset List

(b) Annual Approval of Financial Risk Assessment

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Risk Assessment with the following amendments: -

The number of notice boards should be two not one, and cloud-based storage will be investigated in the case of fire to remove the potential risk of fire damage/theft etc to hard copy records.

(c) Annual Approval of Publication Schedule

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Publication Schedule

Cllr David Richardson-Aitken left the meeting at 8.50pm

11. To Be Resolved

(a) Maintenance of the Lychgate.

Cllr Keith Holder will speak to the family kindly looking after the Lychgate and confirm the current Health and Safety Regulations. This will be brought back to the next meeting.

(b) Proposal to investigate online banking from Lloyds. Lloyds Bank allow two online banking with two authorisations.

The Council **RESOLVED** for the Parish Council to proceed with the process for applying for online banking. This was proposed by Cllr Nicholas Corbett, seconded by Cllr Matthew Rice and unanimously agreed.

(c) Proposal to pay for the grass cutting contract in one invoice at the beginning of the growing season.

The Council **REFUSED** the proposal to pay for the grass cutting contract in one invoice at the beginning of the growing season, they would prefer to pay by monthly invoice.

(d) Proposal to appoint Tim Light from Lightatouch as the Internal Auditor for 2020-2021.

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Tim Light from Lightatouch as the Internal Auditor for 2020-2021, this was proposed by Cllr John McEntee, seconded by Cllr Kim Gibson and unanimously agreed.

(e) Climate Change Initiative – Update from Cllr Keith Hambly

Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council are leading an initiative for Climate Change and putting together a grant application and creating a steering group to tackle the issue. Parish Councils were invited to become involved, there would be no financial impact for the Councils and the amount of involvement is up to each individual Council. Cllr Keith Hambly proposed that the Parish Council join the initiative, this was seconded by Amanda Taylor and unanimously agreed. Cllr Keith Hambly will register the Council's interest and to add Stoke St Michael Parish Council's name to the application.

12. Planning Applications – If other planning applications are received between the date of this notice and the date of the meeting, they may be considered.

No planning applications had been received by the Parish Council.

13. Clerk's Report

(a) Fly Tipping at the Fairy Caves – As mentioned at the last meeting this was referred to the Group Manager for Neighbourhood Services who would undertake a site visit. Still awaiting information on an update.

Update: - Mendip District have paid a site visit and have stated that the land is privately owned so the landowners are responsible for removal of the rubbish, but it was mentioned that the items had now been removed and the area is clear. The site will be monitored.

(b) Bollard outside Ark House – A confirmation was received from Somerset County Council on 1st December 2020 that they had installed the bollards.

(c) Questionnaire on Traffic Issues – This is still being compiled as awaiting information from Councillors as to which issues, they would like included.

Update: - Once Covid is under control a public meeting will be held where residents can discuss the various issues.

(d) Clash of school buses from Whitstone School and Norton Hill – Contact details have not received by the Clerk in order to pursue this.

Update: - A copy of the original email has now been received as sent by a resident, this will be forwarded to Cllr Phillip Ham and he will speak to Somerset County Council.

(e) Overgrown Vegetation – A report was received of Overgrown Vegetation encroaching on Tadhil Lane, this was reported to Somerset Highways on 27th November 2020.

- (f) **Rubbish being left at Cooks Wood** – It has been reported that building spoil has been deposited outside the limits of the planning permission for Cooks Wood and a large number of lorries are passing through the lane to the site. The Enforcement Team at Mendip District Council were contacted and due to current COVID restrictions are unable to pay a site visit but did state “unless there is a specific condition relating to the number and size of lorries working at site then this will not be something that can be controlled under the Town and Country Planning Act.”
Update: The Enforcement team have spoken to the landowner; he has suggested that bunds were being created to hide the derelict buildings located on a neighbouring site so justifying the number of lorries. The Parish Council will await the results of the review by the Enforcement Team. The update was received from County Councillor Phillip Ham
- (g) **Alliance with St Cuthbert’s Out regarding One / Stronger Somerset** – A couple of meetings have initially been arranged for January, as agreed at the last meeting Cllr Keith Holder as the Councils representative has been sent the information.
- (h) **Fingerposts** – Somerset Forge have completed the repairs to the Finger post and Chris Ingrem has been notified that it is now ready for decoration, this will be carried out early part of next year.
- (i) **Blocked Footpaths** A report was received from the Parish Path Liaison Officer to footpath FR8/1 with repairs needed to the bridge as it had collapsed and a fallen tree was also blocking the way. This was reported to Somerset County Council.
- (j) **Road Closure** – The Road will be closed from Burnt House Lane to Tadhill Lane and Susannas Lane to Dark Lane for 12 days starting on 4th January 2021.
- (k) **Traffic Regulation Order for Mill Lane** – Somerset Highways have confirmed their intention to advertise the proposed TRO during January/February 2021. In the absence of substantive objections, they further intend that the necessary works, including signage at either end of Mill Lane, would be completed before the end of the current financial year. Landowner access off Mill Lane will be preserved through the wording of the TRO and the location of the “barrier”.

14. Finance

Bank Balances as at: - Current Account as at 26.11.2020 £7,280.93
Reserve Account as at 9.11.2020 £29,879.83

Receipts

- (a) Burial Fees - £313.00
 (b) Bank Interest - £0.25

Payments

- (c) SLCC Virtual Practitioners Conference - £90
 (d) Zoom Invoices - £28.78
 (e) Ionos – website Hosting - £12.00
 (f) Clerks Salary – December - £258.96
 (g) Annual Membership of SLCC - £83.00
 (h) Somerset Forge Ltd - £528.00

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree the above payments and due to exceptional circumstances the following three was also agreed for payment. This was proposed by Cllr Keith Holder and seconded by Cllr John McEntee

- (i) Stoke St Michael Community Events Group - £300
 (j) EDF Energy - £109.74
 (k) Deeper Green Services Ltd - £240.00

15. Correspondence

- (a) Road Safety Grants from Avon and Somerset Police – forwarded 19th December 2020
- (b) Quarry Liaison update – forwarded 8th December 2020
- (c) Mendip District Council Bulletin on Health and Wellbeing – forwarded 17th December 2020
- (d) Mendip District Council Parish Bulletin about the Planning Consultation and Welcome to the Mendip Landscape – forwarded 17th December 2020
- (e) Letter from Ros Wyke regarding Stronger Somerset – forwarded 22nd December 2020
- (f) January training courses being offered by SALC – forwarded 30th December 2020.

16. Matters to report/items for next agenda

- (a) Missing pane of glass from the Bus Stop on the corner of Mendip Lane and Burnt House Lane.

17. Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 18th February at 7.30pm via Zoom

Meeting Closed 9.42pm

Appendix A

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCILL BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS JANUARY 2021

Covid-19 Restrictions: Revised Government regulations mean that Somerset entered Tier 4 restrictions on from December 31st. The main requirements of this Tier are:

- No household mixing, aside from support bubbles and two people meeting in public outdoor spaces.
- Hospitality closed, except sales by takeaway, drive-through or delivery.
- Essential shops can open. Non-essential retail must close.
- Everyone must work from home unless they are unable to do so.
- Early years settings, schools, colleges and universities open during term time. Registered childcare and childcare bubbles permitted.
- Indoor leisure, accommodation and personal care – closed.
- You must not stay overnight away from home.
- Indoor entertainment closed. Some outdoor attractions may remain open.
- Places of worship open for private prayer and communal worship.
- You must stay at home and only travel for work, education or other legally permitted reasons. You must not leave a Tier 4 area or stay overnight away from home.

Coronavirus infection rates: As at 31st December the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 9355 (up from 5,110 on 1st Dec) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 335 (228). The rate per 100,000 currently stands at 248.3 for Somerset with Mendip at 211.1, Sedgemoor at 332.9, South Somerset 193.1 and SW&T at 268.8. The current number of total deaths across the County is currently 3% above the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 1.0 and 1.2. It is vitally important to remember at all times the Hands-Face-Space message.

Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline: A single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. 0300 790 6275, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm, offering a range of support – from help accessing food or medicines, to emotional and financial support, and employment, housing and business advice.

Vaccination programme roll-out: Somerset residents who have been identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) as the highest priority are being invited for Covid-19 vaccinations first, including people aged over 80 and health and care staff. Residents should not contact their local NHS services for vaccination, they will be contacted when it's their turn and given the information that they need for their appointment. For more information visit: www.somersetccg.nhs.uk/health/local-services/health-services-duringcoronavirus/covid-19-vaccinations-in-somerset

SCC Support: More than 700 County Council staff are being redeployed to support the NHS challenge of rolling out the county's biggest ever vaccination programme. The first community GP-led sites have begun vaccinations and follows the launch of the programme in hospital hubs. Further plans are being drawn up to ensure vaccination in other locations across the county. Operating seven days a week which will require a considerable staffing resource and whilst every effort is being made to avoid disruption to SCC services some impact will undoubtedly be felt in areas outside of vulnerable people services.

High Speed Broadband: Three companies have been selected to roll-out the next phase of full fibre network on behalf of the Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) programme, backed by Government funding. Airband, Truespeed and Wessex Internet will be installing full fibre broadband across Devon and Somerset to more than 56,000 rural homes and businesses over the next 4 years.

One Somerset Pledges: Somerset County Council has set out ten clear One Somerset pledges in the proposed move to a single Unitary authority:

1. No disruption to local services as we change, and a promise to keep you fully informed.
2. We will protect those front-line staff working with vulnerable people across the county.
3. Council tax will not increase because of moving to a single unitary council.
4. Physical, face-to-face council contact points across the county.
5. One telephone number and one website to access ALL council services.
6. Improved services for our vulnerable residents including housing, adults' & children's services.
7. Improved services for our children and young people, including education, training, jobs and transport.
8. More local decision making by our town and parish councils and new local community networks.
9. Closer relationships with partners including the NHS, police, education, and the voluntary sector to deliver better services.
10. We will not split Somerset in half, divide communities, lose our proud identity, or weaken our standing on a local, regional and national level.

2021 Primary School Places: Applications for Primary School places in 2021 need to be made through www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions. The deadline for submissions is Friday, 15 January 2021.

Appendix B

District Council Report from Alan Townsend

STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – JANUARY 2021

PLANNING

As previously mentioned, Mendip has the problem of excessive Phosphate levels on protected (Ramsar) sites on the Levels. At the moment applications for some 1500 houses are on hold. Mendip have at last asked DHCLG to get a grip of Natural England who appear to have imposed the ban without consultation. We are assured that the ban on new building on sites that drain into the Levels will not have an effect on building elsewhere, but of course there is nothing to stop speculative applications.

Local Plan Part 2 Examination – this has now concluded. The requirement for an additional 505 dwellings in the north east of the District was the main issue. The Inspector will produce his report in January and if he recommends any changes to the 5 sites proposed there will be a further consultation with a target of issuing the final report in April.

Consultations – There are concerns about the publicity given by Mendip to the consultations on : Pre application and Planning Performance Agreement Service, Landscape and Character Assessment, and Statement of Community Involvement wrt LPP1. It appears that none of the 5 Parish Councils we are involved with had any formal notification. We propose to take this up with Mendip and request an extension of time to respond.

MENDIP SOCIAL HOUSING

After much heated debate Council finally agreed to pause the programme to allow proper consultation with the affected communities in Frome, Glastonbury and Street and examination of the whole process, including the selection of Aster.

UNITARY REORGANISATION

On 3rd December a special meeting of Full Council voted to promote the case for Stronger Somerset to DHCLG. This is the LibDem proposal for 2 councils, East and West Somerset, to replace the existing structure.

MENDIP FINANCES

The year end forecast is for a deficit of £2.2M from the Budget spend of £17.1M. The interim budget for next year shows a deficit of £1.2M but there are many issues still to be resolved. Full Council has agreed the Tax Base for next year, ie the number of dwellings that will pay Council Tax. Meanwhile much officer time is being dedicated to issuing the government relief funding to local retail and hospitality – some £20M so far.

FLY TIPPING

Mendip Neighbourhood Services paid a visit to the site by Fairy Caves and they concluded again that it is on private land, not the verge for which they take responsibility. Do we know who the landowner is?