

**STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes from the virtual meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

Present: Cllrs John McEntee, Keith Hambly (Chair), Simon Farnsworth, Amanda Taylor, Kim Gibson, David Richardson-Aitken, Nick Corbett, Matthew Rice

Also, in attendance: Kate Egan (Parish Clerk).

**1. Welcome by the Chairman**

**2. Apologies for absence**

Cllr Keith Holder

**3. Absent**

Cllr Keith Holder

**4. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**5. Public session**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

**6. County and District Councillor Reports**

County Councillor Phillip Ham was not in attendance but had forwarded his report which is included under Appendix A.

District Councillor Alan Townsend was in attendance and spoke about his report which is included under Appendix B.

County Councillor Phillip Ham will be chased in regard to the number of lorries still using local road to access Cooks Wood Quarry

**7. To confirm the minutes of the previous meetings held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, previously circulated**

The Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 be accepted as a true record and would be signed by the Chair.

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

**(a)** Item 10 (a) Cllr Amanda Taylor will chase the notes offered by the host of the Webinar and will forward to Councillors.

**(b)** Item 10 (c) The Staffing Committee can now be dismissed as the Clerk's annual appraisal has been carried out.

**(c)** There is no update on the lease agreement for Stoke St Michael Woodlands

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

**(a)** 2020/2600/FUL – Construction of stoned farm tracks across 35 hectares of agricultural farm land at Cooks Wood Quarry.

The applicant has withdrawn the application.

**10. Policies**

**(a)** Volunteer Policy

There was a brief discussion as to what age range would be covered by the public liability insurance. Advice will be sought from the insurance company and if necessary, the policy will be amended and approved at the next meeting.

## 11. To Be Resolved

### (a) Proposal to purchase equipment etc and storage areas for the Volunteers cleaning the Lychgate and Bus Shelter

Cllr Keith Hambly will speak to a local contractor and Cllr Amanda Taylor will find out what other parish councils follow in cleaning their lychgate. A proposal will be brought back to the next meeting.

### (b) Discussion regarding overgrown bushes spreading into resident's gardens in Mead Close and how they can be reduced.

The Council has received a complaint about some bramble bushes at the end of Mead Close having become very overgrown. A local contractor will be contacted for a price to reduce them by 50% or remove

## 12. Clerk's Report

(a) Further to the discussion at the last meeting regarding the traffic issues, no further updates have yet been received. District Councillor Alan Townsend will remind County Councillor Phillip Ham and try and obtain an update.

(b) The Parish Council have responded to a letter from Ian Humphreys regarding planning application 2020/2565/OTS as it misrepresented the Parish Council position and logic in coming to its conclusion to recommend refusal and claims that the Parish Council did not give adequate notice of the meeting.

(c) Mendip enforcement team were contacted regarding the withdrawn of planning application 2020/2600/FUL and the retrospective planning for works already carried out. A response was received stating this will be considered for a new file and the Parish council will be advised accordingly. The enforcement team will be contacted to seek further clarification of the above response.

## 13. Finance

**Bank Balances as at: - 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021**

**Business Account - £11,372.74**

**Reserve Account - £46,436.71**

### Receipts

(a) Annual Precept - £25,170.00 received 14.04.21

(b) Bank Interest - £0.27 received 09.04.21

### Payments

(b) Stoke St Michael Community Playing Field - £5,000.00

(c) CPRE Membership £36.00

(d) SALC – Training - £20.00

(e) Chris Ingrem - £275.00

(f) EDF - £107.95

(g) Bridget Bowen (Internal Auditor) - £280.00

(h) Clerks Salary – April 2021 - £258.96

(i) Ionos Invoice - £12.00

(j) Zoom Invoice - £14.39

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the above receipts and payments.

**14. Correspondence**

- (a) Stronger Somerset Briefing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – forwarded 03.04.21
- (b) Reminder about local Government re-organisation event on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> April – forwarded 05.04.21
- (c) Stronger Somerset – Proposal for referendum on local government reform – forwarded 07.04.21
- (d) Somerset Rivers Authority 2021-2022 Enhanced Programme of Works – forwarded 13.04.21
- (e) Notification of Intention to extend the Public Space Protection Orders – forwarded 05.05.21
- (f) District Councils give local electors a vote on the future of Local Government in Somerset – forwarded 05.05.21

**15. Matters to report/items for next agenda**

- (a) A report has been received of a damaged road sign on the entrance to Stoke St Michael from Oakhill. Photographs will be obtained and sent to Somerset Highways requesting a replacement.
- (b) A footpath sign at the end of Moonshill has become dislodged. Cllr David Richardson-Aitken will inform the Parish PPLO Officer Alun Stewart
- (c) A request has been made to install “Slow Down School Ahead” signs on Tower Hill. This will be forwarded to County Councillor Phillip Ham to incorporate into the traffic issues within the village.
- (d) A report of Japanese Knot Weed growing alongside a footpath within the village, this has been reported to the Explore Somerset website, reference number 61922.
- (e) Wilder Churches – a new initiative from Somerset Wildlife Trust to support biodiversity and wildlife in local churchyards. A representative will be invited to talk about this at the next meeting.

**16. Date and time of next meeting:** To Be advised

Meeting Closed 9.31pm

## Appendix A

### SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

#### BRIEFING SHEET FOR PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS

MAY 2021

**Future Parish, Town and City Council meetings:** The government announced on the 25<sup>th</sup> March that the Coronavirus regulations allowing for remote Parish, Town and City Council meetings would not be extended beyond 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. A subsequent legal challenge launched by Hertfordshire County Council has failed in the High Court and effectively means that all Council meetings scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> May or later will now have to be held in public, face-to-face.

The Government have however launched a consultation on allowing remote or hybrid meetings on a permanent basis via their website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence>

**Road map out of lockdown:** From 17<sup>th</sup> May most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of 6 or 2 households will apply. Most businesses but those in the highest risk sectors will be able to reopen including indoor hospitality. Venues will not have to serve a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks; nor will there be a curfew. Customers will, however, have to order, eat and drink while seated. Other locations to open include indoor entertainment such as cinemas and children's play areas; hotels, hostels and B&Bs; and indoor adult group sports and exercise classes. Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions and wakes, as well as funerals. The final step of the road map is scheduled for June 21<sup>st</sup>

**Coronavirus infection rates:** As at 30<sup>th</sup> April the number of confirmed Covid cases in Somerset was 20,272 (up from 19,982 on 1<sup>st</sup> April) and the number of Covid-attributed deaths 796 (787). The rate per 100,000 stands at 13.7 for Somerset with Mendip at 17.3, Sedgemoor at 17.0, South Somerset 10.7 and SW&T at 11.6. The number of total deaths across the County is currently 20% below the 5-year average and the latest R-value for Somerset is between 0.7 and 1.1.

***It is vitally important to remember, even those who have had a jab, to observe Hands-Face-Space and to Ventilate indoor areas at all times.***

**Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline:** A single phone number continues to be available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support. **0300 790 6275**, is open seven days a week from 8am to 6pm.

**Vaccination programme roll-out:** Somerset has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country with the latest figures showing 324,147 having received at least their first vaccination or 70% of the 16+ population. In addition 151,528 have received their second dose. Take up rates across the County of the first dose remains very high: 80+ (98.7%), 75-79 (100%), 70-74 (99.7%), 65-69 (92.0%), 60-64 (97.4%), 55-59 (96.3%), 50-54 (90.8%) and 45-49 (61.2%).

**One Somerset:** The government's public consultation (the only guaranteed way for the public to have a say) into changing the way local councils work in Somerset ended on the 19<sup>th</sup> April. For more information visit: [www.onesomerset.org.uk](http://www.onesomerset.org.uk)

**Motorcycle Road Safety:** Somerset County Council's road safety team, have launched Raise your Ride, an exciting new initiative for motorcyclists who make up only c.1-2% of traffic, but represent c.21-23% of all road casualties in the UK. The next Raise your Ride events are in Wellington on Sunday 23 May, Frome on Sunday 20 June and Yeovil on Sunday 5 September. The cost for the day is £45 per person. For more information visit [www.somersetroadsafety.org/page/raise-your-ride/124/](http://www.somersetroadsafety.org/page/raise-your-ride/124/)

**Primary School places:** This year more than 98 per cent of Somerset children were offered a primary school place at one of their top three choices, the County Council's latest school admission figures show. Of the 5,365 primary school applications received this year: 1st preference met – 94.58 per cent (5,074 applications), 2nd preference – 3.37 per cent (181 applications) and 3rd preference – 0.56 per cent (30 applications).

**Care provider support:** Somerset County Council have agreed an additional £8.6 million package for 2021/22 for Care providers to help them mitigate against the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The total includes a £4.5 million substantive fee increase, and a £4.1m additional one-off 3% Covid supplement paid as a lump sum at the beginning of the financial year to help providers with cash flow.

**Kickstart work placements:** Somerset County Council has partnered with local employers to offer 50 six-month work placements through the Kickstart Programme, and the vacancies are now live. There are a variety of placements available that could lead to permanent jobs including laboratory stewards, engineering assistants, teaching assistants, business administration roles, grounds assistants, Young People's Champions and more. The Kickstart Programme offers young people aged 16-24 who are claiming Universal Credit the chance to land a six-month work placement, paid at national minimum wage for 25 hours per week. Details are available through the Young Persons work coach at their local job centre.

**Coastal Story Walks:** Somerset's seafaring heritage and lost legends are brought to life in a new set of 'story walks' being launched by the County Council. Created by local poet Chris Jelley, and brought to you by the Rights of Way Team, the set of 12 Storywalks can be accessed by phone or tablet connecting walkers to the local landscape and history. The walks are between one and five km long and are set from Brean Down in the north to Minehead in the west. Simply go to the England Coast Path Story walks page <https://englandcoastpath.storywalks.info/>

**Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme:** Young people inspired by the recent media attention about the D of E charity are encouraged to get in touch to learn new skills, take part in physical activities and gain an award at the end. In addition those who started an award at school, college or in a group such as Guides or Scouts, but didn't finish are also encouraged to get in touch. A Somerset Bursary Fund offers grants to enable disadvantaged young people in Somerset to complete a D of E programme. Those aged between 14-24 living in Somerset who would like to know more are encouraged to get in touch by emailing [DofE@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:DofE@somerset.gov.uk)

## **Appendix B**

### STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL REPORT MAY 2021

#### **PLANNING**

You may have seen that the application for 40 houses at the east end of Leigh was refused by Mendip. Proximity to Halecombe Quarry was not one of the reasons as SCC as the Mineral Authority withdrew their objection. There may be a precedent here for the Yellow Gate field application. This is being taken up with SCC

Application for 63 houses on Anchor Rd Coleford - the closing date for responses to the appeal was 13-4-21 . Timescales are uncertain. An Inspector has yet to be appointed. The consultant's advice is that similar appeals are currently taking some 41 weeks from the Start Date, which takes us to Christmas. The limited consultation on the Emerging Local Plan Part 2 finished on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Timescales have slipped, so the Planning Inspector is now scheduled to publish his final report in May. This will be debated by Mendip's Cabinet in July with a target to approve at Full Council in September. This relaxed timescale is being contested.

#### **FULL COUNCIL**

Following the abortive meeting on 15-4-21, an Extraordinary Meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> April to discuss the holding of a further poll on the Unitary proposals for the county. Many of us had already responded to the Consultation published under the Stronger Somerset banner (the blue tear off paper). The Secretary of State had advised against a new poll on the basis that the proposed exercise "risks duplicating and detracting from the consultation to which thousands of people in Somerset have already responded" it would be "confusing" and inconsistent with his published timescales for decision making, ie before the summer recess. Mendip's share of the costs will be some £65k plus officer time. In addition to the caveats from the S of S, there were warnings of its lawfulness, fairness, value for money and administration of the Council's financial affairs. Warnings of a potential legal challenge with unquantified cost risk were received from Mendip's Finance Officer and local lawyers, however a QC advised that such risks were low in his opinion. The Council voted to proceed with the poll giving the 2 options of One Somerset or Stronger Somerset, ie separate East and West Somerset. It will take place between 18<sup>th</sup> May and 4<sup>th</sup> June and will have postal and online options.

The Annual Meeting of Full Council was held on 26<sup>th</sup> April when memberships of committees were decided. Cllr Ham continues on Scrutiny and as a substitute member of the Audit Committee. Cllr Townsend continues on the Planning Board and on the Audit Committee. A number of changes were proposed to the Constitution which could have the effect of inhibiting debate, this is to be referred back to the Standards Committee.

#### **UNITARY PLANS**

Cllrs Ham and Townsend attended a virtual meeting hosted by Frome Town Council on 28-4-21 to give local parishes their views on the way ahead, assuming that one of the two unitary frameworks will be adopted. The principle of removing a level of local government was discussed, with its replacement by Local Community Networks (LCNs). The LCNs would be Town/Parish driven. We need to consider if we wish to be in an LCN including Frome, or if that would submerge us and a village grouping might work better. The first step is to draft a Matrix listing all the services currently provided by all levels of Councils and then suggest what services are provided at what level. A further meeting will be held in a months' time.

#### **PURDAH**

We have had a period of Purdah prior to the May elections so we did not expect to see any decisions which could be seen to have political implications. For Mendip DC there is a by election in St Thomas Ward in Wells following the resignation of Lib Dem Cllr McKinnell.

#### **HIGHWAYS**

Stoke Bottom – good to see some significant repair work done after further chasing of Highways PH/AT