

STOKE ST MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes from the meeting held on 26th August 2021 in the War Memorial Hall

Present: Cllrs John McEntee, Matthew Rice, Keith Hambly (Chair) and
Amanda Taylor

Also, in Attendance – Kate Egan – Parish Clerk

1. Welcome by the Chairman

2. Apologies for absence

Cllrs David Richardson-Aitken, Nicholas Corbett, Simon Farnsworth and Keith Holder.

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept apologies from Cllr Keith Holder due to ill health.

3. Absent

Cllrs Kim Gibson

4. (a) To receive declaration of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest received

(b) To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests

There were no written requests of dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests received.

(c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate.

Cllrs Amanda Taylor and Keith Hambly requested a dispensation in regard to item 10j.

5. Public Session

There were no members of the public in attendance.

6. County and District Councillor Reports

District Councillor Alan Townsend and County Councillor Phillip Ham were not in attendance, a report was forwarded before the meeting which as been attached as appendix A. There was some discussion on the impact of the Unitary Council for Somerset and this Council's role in the new Local Community Networks. Cllr Keith Hambly will follow up with District Councillor Alan Townsend.

7. To confirm the minutes of the previous meetings held on 8th July and 26th July 2021, previously circulated

Following a change of words, the Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of 8th July be accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the minutes of 26th July be accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

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

- (a) The Parish Council are still awaiting updates on the traffic issues, this will be chased.

9. Policies

(a) Grant Policy

Following some slight changes, the Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the revised Grant Policy

(b) Standing Orders

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Standing Orders

(c) Financial Regulations

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Regulations

(d) Code of Conduct

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the new Code of Conduct and it now runs in line with Mendip District Council.

10. To Be Resolved

(a) Proposal to create a Working Party to oversee the condition of the Lychgate and Millennium Green and to ensure its continuation as an asset to the community.

The Council **RESOLVED** to create a Working Party, if residents would like to join, please contact Cllr Amanda Taylor.

(b) Adoption and approval of the Terms of Reference for the Working Party discussed in the item above.

The Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the Terms of Reference for the Working Party to oversee the condition of the Lychgate and Millennium Green and to ensure its continuation as an asset to the community.

(c) Proposal to accept the draft grant application to Mendip District Council for funds towards maintaining the Lychgate and Millennium Green.

Various options were discussed and it was **RESOLVED** to submit a grant application for £20,000. Items from item e(ii) will also be included. Cllr Amanda Taylor will compile the grant and submit on behalf of the Council.

(d) Approval of the Lease between Stoke St Michael Parish Council and Stoke St Michael Woodland.

This was deferred to the next meeting as a copy of the lease had not been received.

(e) To consider the purchase of equipment to assist with maintenance of the Millennium Wood and the parish footpaths, including appropriate training for Alun Stewart (PPLO)

- (i) **To resolve to cover half the cost of the “brush cutter” course for Alun Stewart - £60 + VAT**

The Council **RESOLVED** to cover half the cost of the ‘brush cutter’ course for Alun Stewart.

- (ii) **To resolve to proceed with the purchase of the maintenance equipment – total cost £1632.12 + VAT**

The maintenance equipment was discussed under item 10 (c) and will be incorporated into the grant application. If the items are not accepted, this will be brought back to a future meeting.

- (f) To consider the purchase of a water butt to be installed at the church for use in the cemetery**

The Council **RESOLVED** to purchase a water butt to be installed at the church for use in the cemetery up to £100. This is subject to permission being granted.

- (g) Proposal to set up a Business PayPal account in order to pay the Monthly Hosting Fee for the website instead of the Council reimbursing the Clerk.**

The Council **RESOLVED** to set up a Business PayPal account.

- (h) Proposal to contribute towards the cost of the Clerk attending the SLCC Conference on 13th and 14th October – Contribution being requested - £75.00**

The Council **RESOLVED** to contribute £75.00 towards the cost of the Clerk attending the SLCC Conference.

- (i) Proposal / Discussion in regard to the potential appeal for the housing development at Yellow Gate**

There was a discussion regarding the potential appeal for the housing development at Yellow Gate, but the Parish Council are still waiting to see if an appeal is submitted, there is a deadline of six months from the date of the decision notice.

- (j) Discussion and Proposal to agree the grant applications for Opening Up Safely and Reconnecting Communities Fund**

Various ideas were discussed and Cllr Keith Hambly will draft a grant application for three separate items making a total of £1,500. The £1,500 would be divided equally between initiatives from the Memorial Hall, the Playing Field and the Community Events Group. The application will be shared by email for comments before passing to the Parish Clerk for comments as the deadline is 30th September 2021.

(k) Proposal to accept the design for the leaflet to be dropped off to residents in Moonshill Road.

It was felt a letter would be more suitable. Cllr Amanda Taylor will work with Cllr Keith Holder to draft a letter. The letter will be circulated via email for comments before being issued.

(l) Discussion on supporting Somerset to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

Cllr Amanda Taylor attended a conference on Carbon Literacy which was interesting and thought provoking about how the Parish Council can help with climate change. A link has been added to the website to Somerset County Councils climate emergency page. There are currently various grants available for Climate Change projects, Cllr Amanda Taylor will submit some applications as the deadlines are fairly close.

11. 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) 2021/1147/VRC – Application to vary/remove condition 2 (drawings) of planning approval 2019/2408/HSE (proposed two storey rear extension, infill of existing porch and re-siting of front door) to replace skylights on west elevation with dormer windows – Glenmead, Stoke Hill, Stoke St Michael **Update** Stoke St Michael Parish Council recommended approval although a comment will be submitted regarding the indecipherable drawings.

(b) 2021/0145/REM – Application for approval of reserved matters following outline approval 2019/0652/OTS for the erection of a dwelling. Matters of appearance / landscaping / layout / scale to be determined. Fair View, Stoke Hill, Stoke St Michael **Update** Mendip District Council have approved the application.

(c) 2021/1505/HSE – Alterations to existing roof, including 2 new gables and roof lights – The Old Farmhouse, Goldsborough Farm, Burnt Land to Townsend. **Update** Mendip District Council have approved the application.

(d) 2021/0304/LBC Part-retrospective listed building consent to regularise changes and incorporate minor alterations – The Mill House, Mill Lane, Stoke St Michael **Update** Mendip District Council have approved the application.

(e) 2021/0303/HSE Part-retrospective to regularise changes and incorporate minor alterations – The Mill House, Mill Lane, Stoke St Michael. **Update** Mendip District Council have approved the application.

12.Planning Applications being Monitored

(a) ENF/2021/0090 Construction of stoned farm tracks across 35 hectares of agricultural farm land to be used for walking, cycling, and bridleways. Cooks Wood Quarry, Bector Lane, Stoke St Michael. The application was withdrawn on 1st March 2021 and an enforcement case was requested due to part of the application was for retrospective planning. The Enforcement Team have confirmed a case has been opened and that discussions are taking place regarding a resubmission.

13.Clerk's Report

- (a)** A leaflet is to be dropped off to residents asking them to refrain from parking on the amenity grass in Moonshill Road. The situation will be monitored and reported back at the next meeting.
- (b)** Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick MP decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the existing administrative county of Somerset. A single unitary council for Somerset will be formed on 1st April 2023 to replace the county's five existing county and district councils
- (c)** Cllr David Richardson-Aitken is taking part in a walk "40 For the Federation". This is to raise money for both the primary schools in Stoke St Michael and Croscombe plus Little Roots Pre-School. The event takes place on 25th September and is 26 miles taking in 4 checkpoints in Mells, Cranmore Tower, Croscombe School and Masbury Castle. Anyone wishing to take part for a small registration fee plus sponsorship please contact Cllr David Richardson-Aitken. The organisers are also looking for marshals and supporters on the day.
- (d)** A report has been received for the Community Speed watch Group regarding overgrown vegetation hiding 30mph limit signs on the entrance to the village. There are two areas of concern – Stoke Hill from Oakhill to Stoke St Michael and Coalpit Lane. The Community Speedwatch have been informed they cannot go ahead until the signs have been cleared. The overgrown hedges have been reported to Somerset County Council, reference numbers 589904 and 589906.

14.Finance

Bank Balances as at: - 02.08.2021

Reserve Account - £41,437.87

Current Account - £5,246.55

Finance Report – Received from PKF Littlejohn (External Auditors) – 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.

Receipts

- (a) Bank Interest - £0.38 received 09.07.21
- (b) Burial Fees - £306.00 – banked 30.07.2021
- (c) Burial Fees - £186.00

Payments

- (d) Somerset Association of Local Councils – Annual Affiliation Fee - £253.78
- (e) Ionos Invoices – July and August - £24.00
- (f) Clerks Salary – July – £293.76
- (g) Clerks Salary – August - £293.76
- (h) Primrose Garden Maintenance Ltd – April – August £3257.15
- (i) PKF Littlejohn – External Auditor - £240.00
- (j) SALC – Being a successful Chairman - £30.00
- (k) Green Gait – Clearance of brambles £276.00

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the above payments and receipts

15. Correspondence

- (a) Somerset Prepared – Copy of the Summer Newsletter – forwarded 20.07.21
- (b) Neighbourhood Planning Training – 8th September – forwarded 23.07.2021
- (c) National Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence – forwarded 01.08.21
- (d) Help to Help Yourself – views needed – forwarded 01.08.21
- (e) Opening Up Safely and Reconnecting Communities Fund – forwarded 01.08.21
- (f) Mendip District Council Planning Bulletin, Phosphate Newsletter – forwarded 06.08.21
- (g) Training Events with Breakthrough Communications – forwarded 09.08.21
- (h) Frome Town Council - Parishes Unitary Next Meeting – October 2021 – forwarded 18.08.21
- (i) Consultation on the Gambling Statement of Principles 2022-2025 – forwarded 18.08.21

16. Matters to report/items for next agenda

- (a) Unitary Issues
- (b) Traffic Update
- (c) Quarterly Budget Review

17.Date and time of next meeting:

Planning Meeting – Thursday 9th September at 7.30pm, location to be confirmed
Full Council Meeting - Thursday 30th September in the War Memorial Hall starting at 7.30pm

Appendix A

STOKE ST MICHAEL PC REPORT AUGUST 2021

UNITARY

The Secretary of State has published his decision that the Unitary Council will be the One Somerset model covering the whole county rather than the Stronger Somerset proposal for separate East and West Somerset unitaries. The next legal steps are Parliamentary approval to be arranged Dec-Jan Elections for new Unitary Council May 2022 Unitary Council Vesting Day 1st April 2023

Prior to this in the next 3 weeks the Councils have to propose the structure for the Unitary Councillors. The Government want no more than 90, Somerset's proposal was for 110.

We need to consider the roles our parishes wish to take in the new Local Community Networks. Coleford are currently included in the preparatory matrix of responsibilities being prepared by Frome Town Council. Stoke may wish to consider being involved in a rural Mendip grouping to avoid the possible risk of being dominated by Frome.

PLANNING

Last month's Planning Board considered 3 large applications for 345 houses on the Keyford side of Frome. The decision was deferred to give the developers the chance to improve their offers. If approved they will contribute significantly towards rectifying Mendip's 5 year housing shortfall. Members received a formal briefing from the developers of the 'Selwood Garden Community' which could bring a further 1700 houses to the south west corner of Frome. The formal application is now with Mendip.

An application by Gladman for 90 houses at Chilcompton has been refused by Mendip at officer level without even going to the Planning Board.

Coleford's Gladman appeal – this went ahead on 18th August on a virtual basis. Mendip were only able to contest it on the basis of the Planning Board's reason for refusal, ie Harm to the Countryside. We argued strongly that Planning Policy, Highways and Sustainability were equally valid reasons for refusal. For the updated Local Plan Part 2 the Inspector's Final Report missed the re-scheduled date of the end of July, though formal adoption is still planned for the end of September. A final draft document was received in time for the Gladman appeal.

CABINET

Somerset Rivers Authority – The SRA was set up in 2015 to find better ways of tackling our flooding problems following the 2013/2014 disasters. We were presented with a paper which shows that funding is being directed not just at the Somerset Levels but also at the higher catchment areas and specific issues within Mendip.

Carbon Management Plan – A 90 page report was presented giving details of how Mendip is going to reduce its carbon footprint by 2030 and reduce our vulnerability to the threat of climate change. The paper was disappointing in that it states that we at our level can have an effect on climate change, which is clearly nonsense in a global context. What we can do is be seen to show a lead. Also it gave no indication of what this will cost us in terms of deep house insulation, electric cars, ground/air source heating to name a few, and also the Council's own costs, payable by us. A Climate Action pledge card is available to help us focus our actions. Villages may wish to consider procuring an EV charging station.

RECYCLING

SWP's problems in Mendip, due largely to Covid and staff shortages, appear to be reducing.

HIGHWAYS

Stoke Bottom – Some repairs have been carried out. These are totally inadequate, Highways have been challenged and have agreed to re-inspect, and also to approach Pennys again about edge erosion.

PH/AT