

## **DRAFT MINUTES OF FIVEHEAD PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE/PLANNING MEETING Held on Thursday 24 June 2021 at 1830 at The Playing Field, Stowey Road, Fivehead**

### **Present:**

Mrs K Beacham - Chair (KB); Mrs L Howard (LH); Mrs P Brett (PB); Mrs N Cameron (NC); Dr B Ferguson (BF); Mrs J Parsons - Clerk/RFO (JP)

### **4134 Public participation**

Nine Members of the Public attended for some or all of the Planning part of the meeting. Given the level of interest, the Chair extended the session to enable views to be expressed and questions to be answered by the applicants for 21/01560/FUL. The key issues raised included the changed siting of the agricultural buildings, the height and impact of the buildings on the landscape, the increased levels of large agricultural vehicles on the narrow rural lanes to access the site and the unregistered drove frequented by walkers and horse-riders, future expansion of the site, plans for maintenance of hedges and drainage, including consideration of an old, shared culvert which is damaged, and how the farm will be managed without the owner living on site.

The applicant explained his intention to move his established business of around 30 cows and 100 ewes, which he did not consider as intensive farming, and planned to be self-sufficient, by growing own crops for fodder. He would be bringing in young post-weaned calves, four times per year for rearing and selling on. He had purchased this land, as he currently rented the majority of the land he was using in Merriott and needed greater security going forward. It was not yet decided whether he would move to the village, leaving open how the livestock were to be managed remotely and whether a further application for living needs would be submitted. The applicant made the offer of a site visit to his current business to view his method of farming.

It was noted that Planning had advised that the location of the buildings should be moved, where it would be closer to ditches for run-off, but the applicant was open to looking at this again. Things had not progressed as he would like, due to Covid and planning delays, and he was still trying to get a drainage consultant on site to give advice. Hedges would be cut in future but had been delayed due to a long sale period.

A show of hands from the Public indicated 1 in favour, 1 against and 3 abstentions.

The public session was closed at 18.48 and the public remained.

### **4135 Apologies for absence**

Mr K Male; Mr M Stanton

### **4136 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

The following Declaration of Interest was made, with no dispensations given:

- i) Relating to matters at Min 4137b – NC, as a property owner neighbouring Glendale, would be asked to withdraw from decisions as necessary.

### **4137 Planning - see <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planningsearch/> for details. The applications below were considered:**

- a) **21/01560/FUL** – Land OS 5067 Green Lane, Fivehead – proposed erection of 3 agricultural buildings and yard area. Members discussed the application taking into account the views expressed by parishioners and the applicants' response, and also the information circulated in the draft briefing document prepared by PB; PB summarised this for the meeting. Despite this being a full application, a number of documents were missing including heritage assessment, landscape plan, habitat survey, arboriculturist assessment, traffic statement, foul drainage report and surface water flooding report. The barns would be positioned in the middle of the field with no screening, harming the character of the landscape. There appeared to have been no consideration given to disposal of waste by spreading on fields on a downhill sloping area, towards a watercourse. The access point was considered unsuitable and with unknown access rights. The important mature hedgerow would have to be removed to accommodate tractors etc. There was no visibility splay entering Stowey Road, which is unsuitable for more large farm

vehicles. A vote was taken with all Members unanimous in objection to the application. They concluded that whilst the Parish is supportive of farming and family businesses, the applicant had not consulted with the Parish Council as recommended at the pre-application stage and therefore there were significant issues that had not been considered, so the application could not be supported.

NC withdrew from the meeting at this point and 5 Members of the Public left.

- b) **20/03631/S37A** – Glendale, Butcher's Hill, Fivehead – application to allow change to siting of the three dwellings, minor changes to layout and elevations and amended landscaping scheme - the Parish Council had received additional plans from the agent and the Planning Officer for comment, showing the same heights and positions of the proposed dwellings but from a different perspective. It was agreed unanimously that confirmation would be sent to Planning that the Parish Council's position is unchanged in its objection to this S73 application. It was agreed that the Clerk would enquire when the verges would be cut-back, as it would be helpful to be able to inform Highways so they could do their inspection after this.

NC re-joined the meeting.

- c) Tree preservation for Fivehead village and parkland trees was discussed, with the Parish Tree Warden in attendance. The Warden was in favour of working towards having more Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), but warned that past experience has shown that they are not always adhered to and can be removed. The decision to grant a TPO lies with the SSDC Tree Officer. The current owner of Cathanger Manor had started an application for an old Oak and other trees in the parkland estate; Tree Officer, Philip Poulton (PP) was in favour of protecting the trees and had intended to visit in 2019, but this had not happened. With the owner of Cathanger now moving on, the Parish Council was considering taking the application forward and it was agreed that priority would be for the Clerk to contact PP to try and set up a meeting for the Council and the Tree Warden to assess these trees; a longer-term project would be to list potential trees for preservation in the rest of the village and to consider whether the SSSI might be extended to include Fivehead Woods. It was noted that TPOs are recorded on Parish Online and currently the Parish has very few (around 6). Further discussions might involve others in the Parish with tree-related interests in future (eg RSPB, Andrew Glide, Wildlife Trust, new owner of Cathanger) to help develop a plan for the future. **Action:** In the first instance, Clerk to contact PP to discuss the possibility of a meeting to assess the Cathanger/parkland trees and report back at next meeting.

The remaining Members of the Public left the meeting.

#### **4138 FY20/21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)**

- a) KB summarised the report of the Internal Auditor (Mr G Balmer). The audit was carried out using digital records (apart from bank statements) in keeping with ongoing Government guidelines for Covid, to minimise risk to the individuals involved. It was noted that the new Clerk had only been in post for seven months of the year and had been learning the job under exceptional circumstances. There were a few minor points for the Council to discuss, but overall, the auditor had found that, despite remote working, the Council had conducted its business in accordance with its regulations and had been pro-active in identifying areas for improvement or of detriment to the Parish.
- i) The financial records had been maintained with close control and oversight, assisted by internet banking and also checks and balances via the Daybook. The Council Financial policy requires original statements to be signed with bank reconciliations. Two had been signed off on electronic statements (1 Mar and 31 Mar) so the Chair signed the originals retrospectively at the meeting. Two very small overspends had been noted by the Clerk in Minutes or the Daybook, which should have had resolutions.
- ii) **Asset Register** – some consumable assets had been disposed of (laptop/printer) which should be removed and a Protected Species Report had been purchased during the year which should be added. **Action:** Clerk to update Asset Register and present to Council for approval, along with updated Risk Report.

iii) **Standing Orders** – the auditor had noted two clerical errors in the Standing Orders document which would be addressed as part of the policy review that would be carried out by end of Sept.

**Action:** Clerk to add to review of Standing Orders by end Sept 21.

iv) **Council minutes** – an error in minute numbering had occurred in the Minutes of Meeting of 2 November 2020. The minutes had jumped from 3199 to 4000. **Resolution: to agree the error in minute numbering and note that minutes from 3200 – 3999 were missing.** Proposed NC and seconded LH. Carried unan. The auditor highlighted several instances where he considered resolutions were required, especially with regard to financial issues. The use of Resolutions and style of minuting would also be reviewed as part of the Standing Orders review. **Action:** Clerk to obtain verification from SALC on latest practice for future improvement. From the next meeting, Members would ensure that, with regard to planning matters, a for/against vote would be held and if further action was required, a resolution would be made. For best practice, they would consider resolutions for all key decisions/actions.

iv) The Council recorded appreciation for Mr Balmer's excellent audit, which supports the continuous improvement of the Council's working practices. Members were sorry to hear that Mr Balmer felt it was time to step down so the Council could benefit from a fresh pair of eyes to avoid repetition which could lead to complacency. His constructive input had been much valued over the years, but the early notice was appreciated so a replacement auditor could be sought for FY21/22. **Resolution: to purchase a special gift of appreciation (up to £60) for Mr Balmer's Internal Audit and input over the past nine years, requiring an overspend of up to £10 on the audit charges budget line.** Proposed KB and seconded BF. Carried unan.

b) **Resolution: to approve Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) of the Annual Return for FY20/21.** Proposed PB and seconded BF. Carried unan. This was signed by KB and the Clerk.

c) **Resolution: to approve Section 2 (Accounting Statements) of the Annual Return for FY20/21, as signed and presented by the RFO.** Proposed NC and seconded LH. Carried unan. This was signed by KB.

d) The period of Public Rights and the Publication of the AGAR and associated documentation on the Parish website will run between Thursday 1 July – Friday 30 July 2021 inclusive (subsequently amended to Thursday 1 July – Wednesday 11 August 2021 to allow 30 working days).

#### **4139 Matters of Report, Questions and Items for the Next Meeting**

a) Clerk - Several planning applications had been received for the next meeting with short deadlines for response. These included an application for Lower Listock Farm (21/01614/FUL) and applications for Squirrelsmead Cottage (21/01761/LBC, 21/01760/HOU, 21/01772/LBC and 21/01771/FUL).

b) KB asked if a formal discussion of the request to allow access to dogs to the Playing Fields might be held at a future meeting of the Playing Fields Committee and their response submitted to the PC, so this could be considered. It would be added to the July agenda but was likely to be discussed in August, as the July agenda was already quite full. PB would follow up with the Chair of the Playing Field.

#### **4140 Dates for Next Meeting**

Monday 5 July 2021 at 7.30pm (venue to be confirmed)

The meeting closed at 7.57 pm.

Chairman.....

Dated.....