

DRAFT MINUTES OF FIVEHEAD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Monday 7 November 2022, at 1830, at The Village Hall, Stowey Road, Fivehead

Present:

Mrs K Beacham – Chair (KB); Mrs L Howard (LH); Mrs C Munday (CM); Mr R Wynn (RW); Mr D Braddock (DB); Mr J Benton (JB); County Councillor R Wilkins (CRW), and Mrs J Parsons - Clerk/RFO (JP)

No members of public in attendance.

4347 County Councillor's Report

The latest report from County Councillors Mike Stanton and Richard Wilkins (CRW) had been circulated to Members and was available on the Parish website (<https://fivehead-village.org.uk/update-from-county-councillors-nov-22/>). CRW highlighted that the extended consultation on Local Community Networks had now closed; 549 responses had been received, including 207 from town and parish councils and 18 groups. He also drew Councillors attention to two letters sent out on 1 Nov from the Leader of SCC and the Director of Finance and Governance, providing information about setting precepts for 2023/24 in the context of the Somerset Council Budget. SC was facing a funding crisis and was not likely to have enough funds from the Government, so would be considering cuts to almost every service area. As precepts would not be capped, town and parish councils were being asked to consider increasing their precepts to cover for potential deficits, in order to keep important community services running. Councils across the country were facing the same issues – impact of inflation, ongoing strain on care services of Covid-19 with no further Government grants and challenges of recruiting and retaining staff to provide services. CRW stated that Devon was in a worse financial position than Somerset and referred Councillors to the recent statement from the Leader of Devon County Council (subsequently circulated).

4348 District Councillor's Report

None

4349 Apologies for absence

Dr B Ferguson; County Councillor Mike Stanton

4350 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council, previously circulated, held on 3 October 2022, were approved. Proposed by DB and seconded by LH. Carried unan. Hard copies were signed by the Chair.

4351 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

None

4352 Matters arising from the Minutes (3 Oct 2022) and raised by Members

- a) Land on south east of road leading from Lower Street to Fivehead – ownership of two small fields had recently changed and significant investment had been made to bring in electricity across a neighbouring farmer's fields to the old stable onsite. The Parish Council was not aware of any planning application so had informed SSDC Enforcement and Councillor Stanton, and would keep a watch so unapproved works could be reported quickly.
- b) Damage to road/pavement – SCC's Senior Transport Officer had contacted the school bus provider for Fivehead and assurance was given that drivers were using Stowey Road to turn safely. KB and DB had checked morning and afternoon drop-offs and this is currently happening but further checks would be made in a few months to ensure this does not slip. **Action:** Clerk to add to March agenda for follow-up.
- c) Village Hall/Playing Field merger update – BF and Graham Land had completed the draft ACRE model (v1.0) and this had been sent out to the trustees of both organisations, with guidance information. It would be discussed at the first joint meeting being held on 8 Nov. Robert Horne, an expert on village hall constitution, had been copied in but had not commented as yet.

- d) Cost of Living crisis/warm spaces – KB had helped to complete the questionnaire with the Village Hall Chair, to inform SCC of possible venues for providing local warm spaces. **Action:** Clerk to submit updated questionnaire to SCC Democratic Services.
- e) Matters arising from Green Group meeting (11 Oct) – i) Fivehead Fixers – DB reported a fantastic response, with over 30 people offering their time/skills, including help with organising Coronation celebrations in 2023, and also donating plants. Members were very grateful for the potential support and hoped to find jobs in future which could be done either under the Council’s insurance or through volunteers’ own professional cover; ii) From 2021, DB had added over 3,000 records of rare species of bat and butterfly to the SERC database, after finding that there was very little listed for our species-rich area. Local developers use the reports when applying for planning permission, so it is important that the database is up-to-date. After 8 weeks of data input, he had found that the records had not been uploaded, so he had contacted SERC and was asked to supply the data via a spreadsheet. He was assured that this would be transferred to the system. Now it seemed that the only way to find out if the data had been added would be to purchase an updated report for around £50. CRW agreed that it was concerning that the records may not have been added and that there was no way to check if records were listed, other than by paying for a report. He offered to take this up with Sarah Dyke, Environment Portfolio Holder and report back at the next meeting. **Action:** DB to email full details to CRW. CRW to speak to Sarah Dyke for her input on how best to obtain confirmation that records have been added.

CRW left at this point and RW joined the meeting.

- iii) Tree felling at Swell Copse – several trees had been cut down recently from the Copse which is shown on Ordnance Survey, on bridleway L11/5. These were mainly dead elm and one live oak tree. The landowner had confirmed that they had been felling the dead elm to encourage the survival and growth of new saplings. It was also noted that they had had to speak to many dog walkers about keeping their dogs under control on the bridleway.
- f) Speed Indicator Device – obtaining quotes from three suppliers was in progress and would be added to the next meeting agenda. **Action:** Clerk to add Dec 22 agenda
- g) Maintenance of the Pound – i) Waste from clearing the Pound and refurbishing the noticeboard had kindly been taken to LH’s land, by Rob Leighton, for disposal. DB had repainted the gate with left-over paint (at no cost), so it was now fully weather-proofed for the winter. There was still some top soil to be moved, which had been taken out of the flower beds. A resident had kindly donated plants ready for the Spring. DB had taken down the WI plaque and this would be re-fixed, along with the decorative tile that the Clerk was storing, after the repair work; ii) The refund of the fee paid in advance for the accountants’ work to help move forward with the transfer of the Pound had not come through in October. The Clerk was asked to follow this up with the owner of the Pound; iii) It was hoped that the damage repair claim would be settled so that all maintenance work could go ahead in Spring 2023 and noted that the walls were now badly in need of attention, for protection against the weather. **Action:** Clerk to follow up refund of fees and add Pound repairs/maintenance to Jan 23 agenda.
- h) Churchyard maintenance – St Martin’s Quinquennial Report recommended that an arboriculturist’s advice was sought about the Yew in the north east section which may be putting pressure on the wall. It was agreed that Woodland & Garden Tree Services would be asked to give advice. DB had also liaised with the PCC and had six people (from the pool of Fivehead Fixers) lined up to help remove the destructive vegetation growing along the wall, when the weather was suitable. **Action:** Clerk to arrange for tree surgeon’s advice on Yew tree and add to Jan 23 agenda.
- i) New signatories - **Resolution: to add BF and CM to the banking mandate as new signatories for payments.** Proposed by LH and seconded by KB. Carried unan. It was noted that credit checks would be undertaken by NatWest Bank. **Action:** Clerk/KB to action mandate update.

The Clerk left the meeting for the discussions at Min 4352j and returned to minute the decision.

- j) Clerk's annual review – the Staffing Working Group (KB, BF and RW) had conducted a successful review with the Clerk, on 2 Nov, via Zoom. Members thanked the Clerk for all her work and confirmed she would be moved up to the next pay point from September 2022. NALC had recently published the pay increase for April 2022 to be applied retrospectively. Hours were coming down, compared to the previous year (averaging at 50 per month), but were not likely to go below 40 per month. It was agreed to approve an additional 10 hours per month from October 2022 to end of March 2023 (ie 40 hours per month) and 10 hours over-time for FY21/22 AGAR work; and to budget for 40 hours, plus 10 hours for additional AGAR work, for FY23/24. The Clerk requested to carry over one week's holiday as it had not been possible to take any paid leave during the previous year. RW offered to look over calculations for converting the Clerk's holiday allowance to hours and KB would organise a follow-up meeting with the Staffing Group to review holiday and working arrangements going forward from April 23. **Resolution: to approve - i) an increase to salary point 16 (£13.70 per hour) from 1 Sept 22, to include back pay for pay increase from 1 April 22; ii) increased hours to 40 hours per month until end of March 23; iii) additional 10 hours over-time for AGAR work for FY21/22; and iv) to carry over the equivalent of one week's holiday as per contract.** Proposed by JB and seconded by LH. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to provide holiday calculation information to RW; KB to arrange follow up meeting for Staffing Group
- k) Remembrance Sunday – LH offered to find out arrangements for services on 13 November. A wreath would be laid on behalf of the parish by KB.
- l) Xmas tree arrangements – LH kindly offered to find out where the lights were currently stored and to speak to Roger at Greenshutters Nurseries about a tree to be installed in St Martin's churchyard. **Action:** Clerk to add to Dec 22 agenda
- m) Condolence book/notices for HRH The Queen – **Resolution: to pay costs of £10.91 for condolence book and other stationery from Office Costs budget line.** Proposed by CM and seconded by LH. Carried unan.
- n) Asset Check report – **Resolution: to purchase a new book to record the monthly check of assets for £3 from Office Costs budget line.** Proposed by KB and seconded by JB. Carried unan.
- o) Signage on Ganges Hill – the SCC Traffic engineer had visited the village to assess the signage and authorised replacement of the 30 repeater signposts on Silver Street and near St Martin's Church. A new *Pedestrian in Road Ahead* warning sign would also be added, following the report of a near miss between a pedestrian and cyclist on the S bend, to help road safety.
- p) Verges on Butcher's Hill – residents at Glendale had updated the Parish Council that the land adjoining the highway on Butcher's Hill had been cleared for a second time, since 2020, for the visibility splay. This had shown that there is a build-up of material along the highway on this section of the hill, which would benefit from clearing, as this could widen the road considerably, to help safety, as well as drainage. The residents had kindly contacted SSDC Highways to see when this would be scheduled. It was agreed that the Clerk would follow up with SSDC, after meeting in March, when the work was postponed until the Glendale site development was complete, and see if the work could be scheduled in early 2023. **Action:** Clerk to contact SSDC Highways for an update on when the work would be scheduled for 2023
- q) External audit work – the Clerk had met with the external auditor on 19 October, to review her recommendations for improving the Parish Council's accounting and reporting spreadsheets. This had been very helpful. The auditor had sent her thanks for the gift of wine, for stepping in at short notice and carrying out the audit. She had now taken on the role of St Martin's PCC Treasurer, so the Clerk had started to look for a replacement auditor and approached a self-employed bookkeeper, who conducts Kingsbury PC's audit, previously recommended by Councillor Paul. She had confirmed that she would be willing to take on the work next year, subject to seeing the terms of engagement, for an estimated cost of £60-£80. **Resolution: to update the audit take-on terms for FY22/23 and send out to C Perrin in preparation for the external audit to be conducted by end of June 2023, for the cost of approx £80.** Proposed by RW and seconded by DB. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to update take-on letter and send out to C Perrin

- r) Website domain name renewal – the renewal notice from Heart Internet Ltd was expected in Dec for the next two years for c£25 inc VAT. **Resolution: to authorise renewal for up to £25 for two further years with Heart Internet Ltd.** Proposed by JB and seconded by KB. Carried unan.

4353 Correspondence Received

- a) A request from SALC had been received to complete a Health & Wellbeing Survey to find out what local Councils are doing to support community health and wellbeing and to inform future grant planning. It was agreed that KB and the Clerk would complete this via Zoom by the deadline (subsequently extended to 23 Dec 22).
- b) Notice of increased legal requirements for Avian Influenza issued by Trading Standards Officer had been communicated to the community via the parish website/social media and a reminder would be included in the Dec parish newsletter.
- c) Due to low up-take, SCC had asked for help to communicate to local farmers that support may be needed with snow ploughing agreed sections of the public highway, should the need arise this year. The Clerk was asked to email local farmers where their emails were available.
- d) A request from Somerset Local Authorities' Civil Contingencies Unit had been received to update database information held for contact liaisons for community emergencies and to consider adding a contact for Fivehead. KB would look at this with the Clerk when completing the questionnaire at a) above but it was likely that this would need to be considered when a parish emergency plan is considered again in future.
- e) The new arrangements for the precept for FY23/24 and the deadline to submit the precept request by Fri 20 Jan 2023 were noted. As discussed at Min 4347, the Leader of SCC was calling for local councils to look at their priorities and consider budgeting for providing for the shortfall in the Unitary Council's budget, where cuts in almost every service were expected. It would be difficult to budget for the unknown deficits. Members were unanimous that transparency was essential and the pressure on living costs would need to be balanced. This would drive the budget decisions to be made in December and January before setting the precept.

4354 Reports

- a) Playing Field / Village Hall – the first joint meeting had taken place to discuss the ethos of the merger. The next meeting on 8 Nov would have a joint agenda and minutes to discuss in more detail the documentation sent out to the trustees – see Min 4352c.
- b) SALC – a regular ebulletin was now being issued, following the take-on of new staff, including Sam Winter who had worked for SALC previously.
- c) Highways – see Min 4352o and p
- d) Environment – see Min 4352e
- e) Rights of Way – MB's report had been circulated and it was noted that L11/2 has a narrow wobbly stile which has been reported to SCC and L11/6 Green Lane is still under a watching brief and has not been forgotten. Also see Min 4352e iii).
- f) Cemetery and Police – no further updates
- g) Asset/Maintenance Check Report – JB took over for Nov 22

4356 Planning - see <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planningsearch/> for details. The applications below were considered:

- a) **22/02543/HOU** - Stowey Barn Stowey Lane, Fivehead, TA3 6PR – application submitted for the erection of a porch extension – **noted**
- b) **22/01294/LBC** – Poolhayes, Higher Swell – application to convert existing dining room back to original and relocated downstairs cloakroom – approved STC - **noted**
- c) **21/01560/FUL** - Land OS 5057, Green Lane, Fivehead, TA3 6PP - proposed erection of 2 agricultural buildings and yard area – approved STC – **noted**. It was also noted that the land had changed ownership since Members had consulted on the application in June 2021.

4357 FY23/24 Finances – Preliminary Discussion

- a) **Resolution: to approve the Asset Listing, Risk Management Report and Insurance cover as of 31 October 2022.** Proposed by KB and seconded by LH. Carried unan.
- b) Grant requests for Fivehead Village Hall/Playing Field – as the two organisations would still be running their finances as two separate charities for the time being, it was felt that requests should be sent to both treasurers and it was hoped that they would discuss this together. JB offered to raise this under AOB at the meeting on 8 Nov (and subsequently confirmed that there will be a request from each Committee). **Action:** Clerk to send out reminder to both VH/PF treasurers for grant requests to be submitted before the December meeting
- c) Grass maintenance – the renewal for the third and final year under the 3-yr fixed contact was discussed. It was felt that the service quality had dropped, with cuts being missed throughout the summer and cuttings often being left, particularly on Langford Corner. The rear of the Cemetery had only just been cut, after several requests. Normally, any missed cuts would be adjusted at year end. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to give feedback on this year’s service and seek assurance that missed cuts would not be charged; hopefully regular cuts could be assured for next year. **Action:** Clerk to write to SSDC Environmental Services with feedback and add to Dec 22 agenda
- d) Budget meeting – informal discussions would be held in preparation for the December meeting on Zoom on 28 or 29 Nov, to include: cemetery rates review; advertising/website policy/rates; grants; projects for FY23/24; reserves review. **Action:** Members to pencil in diary dates for budget meeting and Clerk to confirm and send Zoom invitation

4358 Finance

- a) Payments authorised and unrecorded during the previous month: None
- b) Payments to be authorised:
 - (i) Parish Magazine Printing - newsletter printing Oct 22 (300 copies) - £325.13
 - (ii) The Royal British Legion –Remembrance Sunday wreath - £17 (CHQ) – approved s137 Min4238j
 - (iii)Village Hall – small meeting room fee (Oct) - £16
 - (iv) SALC - Councillor training – Part 1 for JB (21/10/22) - £25
 - (v) J Parsons – Clerk/RFO – Salary (Oct) - £373.50 (30 hrs)
 - (vi) J Parsons – Homeworking allowance (Oct) - £26
- c) Income received:
 - (i) NatWest – Interest (Aug) - £10.18
 - (ii) A Graham – Newsletter advertising - £27.50

4359 Matters of Report, Questions and Items for the Next Meeting

- a) Clerk – budget discussions for FY23/24

4360 Date for Next Meeting

Monday 5 December 2022 at 6.30pm, Village Hall, Stowey Road, Fivehead

The meeting closed at 8.54pm.

Chairman.....

Dated.....