

**DRAFT MINUTES OF FIVEHEAD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Held on Monday 4 March 2024, at 1830, at The Village Hall, Stowey Road, Fivehead**

**Present:**

Mrs K Beacham – Chair (KB); Mrs L Howard (LH); Dr B Ferguson (BF); Mr D Braddock (DB); Mr M King (MK); Mrs C Munday (CM); Mr R Wynn (RW); Somerset Councillor M Stanton (MS); and Mrs J Parsons - Clerk/RFO (JP)

**4568 Public participation**

Three members of the public were present - the residents of 3 Glendale and the prospective buyer of 2 Glendale - for the review of the landscape management plan for application 21/02786/S73A.

The buyer of 2 Glendale explained that all planting for the property's perimeter hedging had been carried out, but it would take time to grow above fence level, to achieve the screening that was hoped for by residents backing onto the properties from Ganges Close. The land in the buffer zone is lower, where the bank slopes away, but five trees had been planted to the stipulated height of around 2-2.5m. They had discussed with residents, after the Planning meeting on 11 Feb, about achieving screening from their properties, as their gardens were on higher ground, which would bring faster results; a suggestion to plant bamboo had been turned down due to ongoing maintenance needed.

The residents at 3 Glendale had previously liaised with residents on Ganges Close and agreed to retain the remaining established trees to help with screening, which was not part of the plan, although one (small lime) may need to be taken down in the near future, due to disease.

The public session was closed. The members of public remained in the meeting and were given the opportunity to clarify any points raised.

**4569 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

Relating to matters at Min 4574k - BF, as a member of the Playing Field Committee, would remain in the meeting but withdraw from any decisions as necessary.

**4570 Review of 21/02786/S73A – 18/01855/FUL – landscaping management plan**

The Chair brought forward agenda item 6d, to review the conditions for landscape management for the Glendale development, and to consider any follow-up action. Concerns had been raised by residents of overlooking and loss of privacy, due to the removal of the woodland, and the replacement landscaping not being established enough to screen the properties, when viewed from Ganges Hill, Butcher's Hill and Tudor Cottage.

The landscaping scheme approved with the application needed to be carried through and the Council was seeking to understand how this was being delivered, and the time-frame, in order to be able to explain to residents, who had expectations that the development would be restored, in part, to a woodland setting. It was felt that more screening, with larger trees, would benefit both sides of the west boundary. Photos, taken from two of the properties most badly affected on Ganges Close, showed the extent of the overlooking.

It was noted that at the point of sale, the conditions for landscaping were severed and each property owner was now responsible for their property landscaping.

The owners of 1 Glendale were in the process of planting a large number of trees to replace diseased ash die-back and Dutch elm trees (as reported in Community Matters Dec issue).

A large number of trees had also been planted by the owners of 3 Glendale, as well as 600 daffodils, 300 snowdrops and wild garlic; a successful wildflower meadow had been created in the first season of occupancy. From past experience of maintaining a substantial wood on a previous property, they felt that small, bare-rooted trees would do better than larger container grown trees. The requirement of the highest tree on the plan was 3-3.5m. The locations of the planting could be moved, if necessary. To date, 750 plants had been added, with some failures, and planting was ongoing.

On the grass verge, on Butcher's Hill side, trees had been planted including oak, horse chestnut, and field maple, with two further trees on order, which had been difficult to source. The planting plan was complex, but residents were enthusiastic and committed to the long-term implementation, as far as practical.

An amendment to substitute hedging for cat-tail fencing had been approved, which would help maintain the corridor for dormice and other wildlife. DB highlighted an issue with the upper section of the bat house, which was impeding entry for bats. It was hoped that they would return to the site now building was completed.

The Council proposed that quick action was needed to address the privacy issues raised. It was agreed that practical solutions would be considered. KB offered to contact the residents on Ganges Close to discuss possibilities from their side of the fence. Residents of 3 Glendale would contact property owners on Ganges Close/Butchers Hill, backing onto their property, to discuss the location of two further trees (potentially field maple) to provide optimum screening, which would grow rapidly.

It was agreed that DB would meet with the owners of 3 Glendale to look at the diseased lime tree and also help with expert advice on bat house improvements. KB and DB would report back at the next meeting. **Actions:** KB to arrange to meet with residents of Ganges Close; DB to meet with Glendale owners. Clerk to add to April 24 agenda

The members of the public were thanked for coming along to assist with the review and they left at this point.

#### **4571 Apologies for absence**

None

#### **4572 Somerset Councillors' Report**

MS gave a verbal update. The budget had been passed, with minimal support received from the Government. Savings would mainly be achieved by selling off surplus buildings (due to the merging of the councils), but the following year still posed difficulties. This was a national issue, with 40% of councils currently facing financial emergency, due in part to reduction of government grants to help councils fulfil social care responsibilities with increasing costs. Despite our county costs being less than average, and with government support and increased council tax, the national wage increases would not be covered. Somerset care costs were growing due to the population aging and more people moving to the county for retirement.

MS reported that lighting at Isle Fruit Farm was now in use, but the MD had given assurance that the new lighting would not be turned on; they were only using the older lighting that had been use for years. It was noted that photography can distort the perception of light and colour.

MS would make enquiries regarding the long-term storage of the crane at Fivehead Court - see Min 4574c.

MS left the meeting at this point.

#### **4573 Minutes**

- a) The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council, previously circulated, held on 5 February 2024 were approved. Proposed by CM and seconded by LH. Carried unan.
- b) The Minutes of the Planning Meeting of the Parish Council, previously circulated, held on 12 February 2024, were approved. Proposed by MK and seconded by BF. Carried unan.

#### 4574 Matters arising from the Minutes (5 Feb / 12 Feb) and raised by Members

- a) Local Community Network (LCN) update – i) the meeting had been put back to 25 March to enable the Highways Working Group to meet ahead of this, on 21 March, to discuss the highways steward role. LH would attend LCN meeting. ii) a letter to all clerks regarding highways maintenance devolution with proposed options for local enhancement of maintenance services had been received and noted. This included helping with drainage – see Min 4574b. **Action:** LH to attend on 25 Mar, venue tbc. No representative available for 21 Mar; Clerk to add update to April agenda.
- b) Draining/ditch maintenance/mud on Isle Brewers Road – i) Highways had visited on 23 Feb to look at points raised by DB in his flood survey with DB, KB and the Clerk. Works would be booked in for the new financial year to try to improve the main pinch points – the bottom of Butchers Hill near the Pound, the top of Ganges Hill and the entrance to Ganges Close, and Lower Swell. The Clerk would write to thank Highways and summarise the work as agreed. ii) Some further maintenance work to ditches, drains and adding grips (small channels) to assist the flow would be helpful to avoid surface water build-up in these areas and on Isle Brewers Road. The Clerk would look into insurance cover requirements and report at the next meeting. iii) Isle Brewers Road was reported to be very muddy for residents and walkers using this route. Highways recommended writing to the farmer whose contractor transports slurry to his fields after the winter, to ask if another clean-up might be done, although it is not a legal requirement. The state of the road would be kept under watch and added to a future agenda for follow-up. **Action:** Clerk to make insurance enquiries and add to April agenda.
- c) Crane enquiries – the Clerk had sent a follow-up report to Planning on 15 March, asking if a light should be on the top of the crane, following the landing of the air ambulance in an adjacent field. No further response had been received but our Somerset Councillors were looking into this.
- d) **21/02786/S73A – 18/01855/FUL – see Min 4570**
- e) Training – i) DB had attended a useful SALC training session on tree/risk management. Slides had been circulated. Trees in the Cemetery and churchyard were regularly reviewed and work had been carried out as necessary; no further action required at this stage. ii) KB had attended a free data protection session organised by SALC. Slides had been circulated. It was recommended that all councils consider changing over to .gov domains for website/email for best practice, and government funding (£100 + VAT) and support would be available to help with the transition. It was agreed that the Clerk would register for support and request updated costings from the current web provider. iii) BF/RW/DB and a resident had completed Chapter 8 training organised via Bridgwater TC on 29 Feb. The Clerk was asked to send thanks to David Mears, Town Clerk, for a well-organised day. iv) **Resolution: to authorise additional overspend on the training budget line of £125.60 for VAT payable on training fees previously authorised for payment from CIL funds in Reserves (Min 4532).** Proposed by KB and seconded by MK. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to look into costs for changing to .gov domain and to write to BTC.
- f) Speed Indicator Device – i) Now training was completed, the Memorandum of Understanding with Somerset Council would be signed; ii) Updated costings for the latest model of SID would be obtained, which would require SC approval; iii) Clear Insurance would be contacted regarding cover for installing and moving the SID and also for accidental damage. iv) A working group would be needed to identify locations, with photos, to send to SC for approval and possibly a site visit. **Action:** Clerk to obtain costings and insurance information and add to April 24 agenda.
- g) Clear insurance enquiries – i) The insurers had confirmed: “*The standard mandatory limit under the policy is at £10 million for Public Liability and cannot be amended.*” Preference was for all contractors to have the same public liability limit as the PC, but having lower levels would be accepted as long as the indemnity limit is commensurate with the risk ie staying at ground level, using hedge trimmers, rather than chain saws, where £10M would be required. All hazardous works must be carried out by professional contractors with their own Insurance. ii) It was expected that volunteers would only be involved in non-hazardous work, with non-powered tools.
- h) Grass maintenance FY23/24 – i) the final invoice from Somerset Council had been adjusted for reduced and missed cuts during the year. **Resolution: to accept the reduction of £521.82 ex VAT.** Proposed by KB and seconded by CM. Carried unan. ii) the new contractor (Greenaways) would be starting mid-March; DB/Clerk would arrange an introduction meeting. Payments would be made monthly going forward.

- i) Langford Corner registration update – KB had obtained summary title details showing that Langford Corner had been registered. Full title, with the title number, would require an additional payment of £7 to the Land Registry. **Resolution: to authorise payment of £7 Land Registry fee for title documentation from legal fee reserves.** Proposed by LH and seconded by DB. Carried unan. **Action:** KB to obtain title deed and claim reimbursement of £7 from the legal fee reserves. (This is no longer required as the title document came through on 6 March, free of charge.)
- j) Church walls/Pound – DB/Clerk had met with the contractor to sign off the remaining work on the Pound and St Martin’s perimeter walls. This was subject to a few snagging points being completed (which DB subsequently checked and confirmed had been done). The Clerk had been authorised to make the remaining payments of £5200 from Reserves at Min 4556n. Members were very happy with the work carried out in Dec/Jan and pleased to have all works finally completed. It was noted that a section on the inside of the wall may need future attention, depending on root pressure, so would be kept on a watching brief. ii) It had not been possible to bed the decorative tile into the wall inside the Pound as proposed; it was not in keeping with the old stonework to have it standing proud, fixed with steel bars. It could also get knocked by people sitting on the bench. DB proposed to add this to the information plaque to mount in the flower bed. Designs and costings would be considered at a future meeting. **Action:** DB to propose design with costs, incorporating tile to mark completion of the renovation works in 2024.
- k) Playing Field/Village Hall – i) Merger update - there were now three authorised signatories on the Playing Field (PF) mandate, including KB, who had joined temporarily to help keep the merger moving forward. The Charity Commission had authorised KB, as administrator, on 4 March 2024. The new bank account application was still going through. KB was helping to collect payments from the sports teams using the pitch. Members thanked KB and BF for all their work to keep everything running. ii) A revised grant application request from the PF for £2875 had been circulated. It was hoped that the merger would be completed by the start of the 24/25 financial year. No fund raising was taking place, but there were sufficient funds to cover maintenance costs, with some pitch hire fees expected. It was not anticipated that the marquee would be hired outside the parish. **Resolution: to award a grant of £2875 to Fivehead Playing Field towards running costs for FY24/25.** Proposed by DB and seconded by LH. Carried unan. It was noted that once the merger was completed, the requirements for next year’s application would be sent to the new charity, which would be to support seed/development projects to take the new charity forward. **Action:** Clerk to add to April payments and KB to notify any bank account changes as necessary.
- l) Village Green update – i) Coronation bed – DB had started to dig out the bed with help from the Fixers, but had hit compacted soil; it was hoped this could be dug out (subsequently confirmed that this would not be possible, due to this being remains of old foundations, so alternative options would be discussed at April 24 meeting). ii) The edge of the path near the noticeboard had become slippery, so DB had obtained costs for some rubber matting, which could be embedded to make it firmer, when the grass grows through. **Resolution: to authorise c£13 to purchase a small piece of black rubber mat to install at the end of the path, from maintenance budget line.** Proposed by KB and seconded by BF. Carried unan. **Action:** DB to purchase and install the mat.
- m) Renewal of Norton Anti-virus software for 2023 – **Resolution: to approve the annual renewal of virus protection software for the PC laptop (c£15) from office budget line.** Proposed by LH and seconded by RW. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to order software update and install
- n) Parish newsletter update – i) **Resolution: to authorise an anticipated printing price increase from April 2024 of c5% to cover material/staff cost rises.** Proposed by DB and seconded by CM. Carried unan. ii) Despite losing a few advertisers, advertising income for 2024 would remain around budget; this was mainly due to a new advertiser increasing their space to a full page. The editor would start to promote the new online directory to encourage renewals from March onwards. This year, it would be a free for business advertisers of the newsletter with a view to charging for this, as an add-on only, from 2025. The flyer to promote this had been circulated, with the editor’s suggestions, and was accepted.

#### 4575 Correspondence Received

- a) NALC and the Cabinet Office were offering councils to apply for one free framed portrait of HM The King to display in their local public venues. It was agreed that BF would raise this at the next Village Hall meeting to see if trustees may like to display one in the Hall. (It was subsequently agreed that the Village Hall would like to display the King's portrait so this has been ordered.)
- b) Details of a hedgehog protection scheme from Hedgehogs R Us had been received. The cost for leaflets and highway signs (£150) was considered quite high so it was agreed that other sources should be considered. **Action:** Clerk to look into costs and add to June 24 agenda
- c) Concerns were reported from a resident of ongoing speeding on Butchers Hill and A378, putting pedestrians at risk. Plans to purchase a SID (see Min 4574f) were going ahead, now that training had taken place, which would help to gather data on speeds to pass onto the Police, if necessary, to enforce speed limits.

#### 4576 Reports

- a) Playing Field / Village Hall – the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 5 March. See Min 4574k for latest merger update
- b) SALC – the latest report had been circulated.
- c) Environment – DB reported that projects for Fivehead Fixers this month would include putting up the new dog bin on Swell Lane; tidying the Pound after the renovation work, including bagging up left-over stone, which would be offered for donations to the defibrillator fund; and tidying Langford Corner.
- d) Rights of Way – PPLO reported: i) A team of eight had cut back the overgrown hedges and tidied waste on L11/51, using a brush cutter and hedge trimmer borrowed from Curry Mallet PC. It was hoped that Somerset Council (SC) may provide us with a hedge trimmer, as the team planned to take on more hedge cutting in future (subsequently received on 10 March). ii) SC had asked if the team would take on L11/6 and L11/7 footpaths near Green Lane, which DB had agreed to do. iii) SC was sourcing a membrane to help the surface of the path on L11/6, which would be a long-term plan to improve the condition. iv) Another popular path along the southern edge of West Sedgemoor runs through three meadows, which when wet, walkers take a diversion along a private woodland path. The owner has put up signs as a reminder, as this is not part of the public path.
- e) Highways, Cemetery and Police – no further matters of report
- f) Asset check – RW would carry this out in March.

#### 4577 Planning - see <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/view-and-comment-on-a-planning-application/> for details.

##### The applications below were considered:

- a) **To note - 23/00961/FUL – Land OS8356 Isle Abbotts Road, Fivehead – change of use of land to 5 gypsy/traveller pitches – approved STC**
- b) **To note 23/00773/FUL – Old Rectory, Higher Swell, Fivehead, TA3 6PZ – formation of new access – approved STC**

#### 4578 Finance

##### a) Payments authorised and unrecorded during the previous month:

- (i) Village Hall – Small meeting room (Feb) - £18
- (ii) Evergreen Garden Services – Posts/Mix/Delivery - £161

##### b) Payments to be authorised:

- (i) Somerset Council – Grass maintenance FY23/24 - £1174.03 (inc VAT)
- (ii) Bridgwater Town Council – Chapter 8 training (4 delegates – 29 Feb) - £753.60(inc VAT)
- (iii) Village Hall – Small meeting room (Feb planning meeting) - £4.50
- (iv) Village Hall – Small meeting room (Mar) - £18
- (v) D Braddock – Wood oil for village green posts (Amazon) - £19.95 (inc VAT)
- (vi) J Parsons – Clerk/RFO – Salary (Feb) £598 plus overtime/back pay £487 (authorised Min 4532I) - £1027.37
- (vii) HMRC – J Parsons PAYE (Feb) - £57.63
- (viii) J Parsons – Homeworking allowance (Feb) - £26

c) Income received:

- (i) NatWest Interest (Jan) - £84.07
- (ii) M Braddock – Defibrillator quiz donation - £25
- (iii) Stones – Memorial (Kingsbury) - £155
- (iv) The Stable – Newsletter advertising - £60
- (v) Burrow Environmental – Newsletter advertising - £60
- (vi) Woodlouse – Newsletter advertising - £30
- (vii) K Muschamp – Purchase of Garden of Remembrance plot (R9) for joint ashes burial - £130

**4579 Matters of Report, Questions and Items for the Next Meeting**

a) Another very successful defibrillator awareness evening had been held by the Village Hall defibrillator sub-group on 27 Feb, with 56 people coming along. Donations of £50 had been received; £10 had been used to pay for printing leaflets and posters to advertise the evening, which had helped boost numbers; the remainder would be paid into the Parish Council account for future funding of the defibrillators.

**4580 Date for Next Meeting**

Monday 8 April 2024 at 1830 at Village Hall, Stowey Road, Fivehead

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Chairman..... Dated.....