

DRAFT MINUTES OF FIVEHEAD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Held on Monday 11 December 2023, at 1830, at The Village Hall, Stowey Road,
Fivehead

Present:

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

No members of the public present

4528 Apologies for absence

Mr R Wynn; Mr D Braddock; Somerset Councillor Richard Wilkins

4529 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Relating to matters at Min 4532g, LH, would remain in the meeting but withdraw from decisions.

4530 Somerset Councillors' Report

The latest report had been circulated to Members and is available on the Parish website here:

<https://fivehead-village.org.uk/update-from-somerset-councillors-nov-23-2/>

MS gave an update on the position of financial emergency declared by Somerset Council, as budget preparation continues. For further details, please see the report above. A public consultation website had been launched and would be open until 22 January (<https://fivehead-village.org.uk/press-release-public-consultation-on-budget-setting/>). The Council was seeking ways to make efficiencies and things were moving in the right direction for next year.

MS left at this point.

4531 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council, previously circulated, held on 6 November, were approved. Proposed by LH and seconded by BF. Carried unan.

4532 Matters arising from the Minutes (6 Nov) and raised by Members

- a) LCN update – i) LH attended the LCN meeting Monday 13 Nov, at Edgar Hall. ii) Residents from Fivehead had attended the Active Travel Group meeting and were willing to be involved to help take plans forward. They reported that the ultimate plan is for all ability active travel routes throughout the LCN area, which may take some time to achieve, given the current financial climate.
- b) Planning comments – following residents' concerns, it was agreed that the Clerk would write to Somerset Council to ask for standardisation of the different approaches within the four areas. Currently, Mendip was the only area which did not publish personal details for public comments on applications. It was hoped that this system might be extended across all areas, so people would not be put off commenting. It was noted that comments from a recent application had been picked up by the media and published. **Action:** Clerk to write to the lead planner to request the systems be consistent in not publishing personal data as soon as practically possible.
- c) Speed indicator device (SID) – i) KB had written to the Police Commissioner's office and been referred to the local officer, regarding the Avon and Somerset Police Fund; this would not be open to applications until April 2024. ii) Costings for Chp 8 training from four training suppliers had been obtained. Joining Bridgwater Town Council (BTC) would be the most cost-effective option. The proposed date was 29 Feb 24. **Resolution: to authorise the booking four places for three councillors and one resident volunteer, total cost £628 from CIL reserves.** Proposed by KB and seconded by LH. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to book places with BTC.
- d) Pound / Church wall repairs – i) Following a site visit on 24 Nov, it was agreed that weather permitting, work would start on St Martin's perimeter walls, with a variation to the mortar mix to ensure durability, agreed with the church architect, and caveat that any failure would be rectified in the Spring.

- ii) Tending of the repaired corner of the Pound had been completed and photos had been sent to Somerset Council's Conservation officer for comment. KB and the Clerk had met with the stonemason on 30 Nov to sign off the work; this was subject to a few holes being plugged and the corner being protected from cold weather whilst it continued to dry out. The residents at Glendale had kindly transferred the agreed contribution towards the repairs in advance to help with cash flow. The remaining work would continue weather permitting. **Resolution: to authorise immediate full payment for the damage repair work (invoice received for £2800) from Reserves, which would be recorded in January 2024 finance report, subject to caveat that any failure would be put right in the Spring.** Proposed by BF and seconded by MK. Carried unan.
- e) Defibrillator update – i) BF confirmed that a minimum of £537 was held in the Village Hall account. ii) Several generous donations had been received from the community towards future running costs: £300 from The Stable and £300 from the new family at Langford Manor; also donations from The Crown pub quizzes of £45 and a cheque donation of £10 from a resident's winnings from the 100-Club had been gratefully received.
- f) Village newsletter – i) a small increase of c5% from Jan 24 was approved. **Resolution: to authorise the rate increase for 2024.** Proposed by CM and seconded by KB. Carried unan. ii) In recognition of the editor's continued excellent running of the advertising and production of the newsletter throughout 2023, Members proposed an honorarium of £200 to be paid. **Resolution: to pay an honorarium of £200 to the newsletter editor for services in 2023.** Proposed by CM and seconded by MK. Carried unan.
- g) Tree for St Martin's churchyard – **Resolution: to authorise the planting of a Dwyck Beech tree in St Martin's closed churchyard, on 5 Jan 24.** Proposed by KB and seconded by CM. Carried unan. It would be located just behind the area where the Xmas tree was currently located, away from the wall. It would grow to be tall and narrow. Rev Patterson had been consulted.
- h) Internal audit – the Clerk was waiting to hear if last year's auditor would be able to complete the 23/24 audit and would follow up in January if necessary. **Action:** Clerk to add to Feb 24 agenda
- i) Future meeting dates – dates for 2024 had been circulated and would be published on the noticeboard and website.
- j) SALC risk management training update – DB had attended free training on 27 Nov, provided by Clear Councils, the new name for our insurer BHIB. DB reported that things were being done correctly with just a bit of tidying up of the risk assessment form needed. The Council had said that £5M PL insurance would be sufficient, so the Clerk would look to see if the cover could be reduced when the renewal was due, to see if this would give a small premium reduction. **Action:** Clerk to follow up when renewal notice is issued in May 24
- k) Emergency plan – LH had a copy of a draft plan and would look over this to see how this might be taken forward in the new council year. **Action:** Clerk to add to March 24 agenda
- l) Clerk's back pay/overtime – i) backpay Apr – Aug 23 SCP 16 – 200 hours (+£1 per hour - £200); Sept/Oct SCP 17 – 80 hours (£1.25 per hour - £100); Nov SCP 17 – 40 hours (+£1 per hour - £40). ii) additional overtime (10 hours – SCP16 @£14.70 - £147). **Resolution: to authorise total back pay of £340 for 23/24 pay increase and additional 10 hours overtime of £147, resulting in an overspend on the salary line of £303.** Proposed by LH and seconded by CM. Carried unan. iii) Carry forward of unused leave to be added to Feb 24 agenda.

4533 Correspondence Received

- a) A letter from the Leader of Somerset Council asking local councils to consider asset and service devolution was considered and how this would affect the FY24/25 budget/precept. It was agreed that a response would be sent that Fivehead and Swell, being a small parish and already maintaining the closed churchyard, cemetery, village green, Langford Corner and the Pound, had nothing further to take on. Volunteers also help to keep the parish looking good, including litter-picking, fingerpost maintenance and footpaths. **Action:** Clerk to write to the devolution team with the Council's response. If residents wish to give their views, a public consultation had been launched that day, open to 22 Jan 24; further details can be found on the village website - <https://fivehead-village.org.uk/press-release-public-consultation-on-budget-setting/>.

- b) Following the resignation of SALC's CEO, the Chairman was requesting suggestions for future services/support, which might include support with the devolution of assets mentioned in Min 4533a. The Council valued the training and legal advice resources and access to NALC via the subscription, particularly the specialist advice given by the past CEO personally. **Action:** Clerk to write to give the Council's feedback for future service needs.

4534 Reports

- a) Playing Field / Village Hall – the merger was progressing, with work being done by the joint committees. Robert Horne now had the signed vesting documents and an application had been made to the Charity Bank for a new account. Village Hall bookings were back to pre-Covid levels and successful fundraising events included the recent bingo, with over 90 people attending and lots of prize donations.
- b) SALC – a report from CM had been circulated following her attendance at the AGM on 2 Dec. It was noted that this was the first AGM of SALC Ltd, with accounts for the period ending March 2022. There had been £166k surplus in its first year. New staff had been appointed.
- c) Cemetery – none
- d) Highways – debris in a layby in Swell had been reported and removed.
- e) Environment – i) following the completion of the third signpost on Swell Lane, residents had written to formally thank DB for the wonderful job that had been done repairing the damaged fingerpost, despite the challenging weather. ii) the Council was grateful to Matravers Engineering for making and donating the replacement brackets for the signposts; iii) it had been too wet to start replacing the posts and the coronation bed on the village green, so this had been postponed to Spring.
- f) Rights of Way – PPLO reported: i) the Ranger's budget had been cut and now only items under £100 would be approved unless they were a health and safety issue; ii) new steps had been installed on Green Lane L11/6 and hardcore would be laid on the new steps and the wettest parts of the path so the Lane was slowly improving due to help from the volunteers. iii) the steps on L11/22 had not been replaced but the Ranger would look for resources to put in tops to make them safe as they are currently very difficult to use. iv) a meeting to consider the reinstatement of L11/32 which had been shut for 40 years would take place on 12 Dec; v) it was hoped that waymarker posts would be installed on L11/51 and the team would try to tackle the expanding hedge on the north side over time. vi) L11/52 remains muddy when wet but a ditch is being organised along the northern side to help remove the worst of the water.
- g) Police – i) MK attended the Police Commissioner's Forum in Yeovil on 8 Nov and reported that the main focus of funds was for Yeovil. There was nothing to report for rural funding. It was important to report anything that does happen to assist crime mapping. ii) The Police Commission, Mark Shelford had launched a survey to consult on potentially raising the Police precept. Further details can be found on the village website: <https://fivehead-village.org.uk/police-survey-comment-on-policing-part-of-your-community-tax/>

4535 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) **23/02759/HOU / 23/02760/LBC**– Langford Manor, Lower Swell, TA3 6PH - proposed kitchen alterations and new roof lights – there were no comments to be submitted.
- b) **23/00961/FUL**– Land OS 8356 Isle Abbots Road, Fivehead – change of use of land to 5 gypsy/traveller pitches - no further update

4536 FY24/25 Finances/Budget

- a) Grant requests – Village Hall/Playing Field – a request for a maintenance grant for the Playing Field similar to the previous year had been received and the Village Hall would not be submitting a request. Last year's grant for support for the outdoor lighting project had been added to Reserves should the project go ahead in 2024. It was agreed that further information on spend in 2024 and fundraising was required before a decision could be made. **Action:** Clerk to request further financial supporting information and add to Jan 24 agenda.

- b) DB had assessed the tools on the Parish Council's inventory and reported that they were mainly in poor condition after 15 years. He had salvaged a few which would be usable by the Fixers. It was proposed to update the inventory to write off the old tools, leaving the few which were worth around £40. **Resolution: to dispose of the old tools and update the inventory accordingly.** Proposed by BF and seconded by MK. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to update the Asset Register to write off the old tools.
- c) Cemetery fees for 2024 – **Resolution: to increase the Cemetery fees by c5% effective 1 January 2024.** Proposed by KB and seconded by LH. Carried unan. **Action:** Clerk to post details of the new fees on the website by 31 December 23.

4537 Finance

- a) Payments authorised and unrecorded during the previous month: None
- b) Payments to be authorised:
 - (i) Royal British Legion – wreath - £20 (S137 approved Min 4483k)
 - (ii) J Parsons – Clerk/RFO – Salary (Nov) - £558
 - (iii) J Parsons – Homeworking allowance (Nov) - £26
 - (iv) J Parsons – Dog bin for Swell Lane (Wybone) - £328.16 (inc £54.69 VAT and delivery)
- c) Income received:
 - (i) NatWest Interest (Oct) - £84.36
 - (ii) Oak Funeral Services – Deed/burial (Woodhill 1/11) - £515
 - (iii) M Braddock – Defibrillator quiz donation (Crown) - £15
 - (iv) M Braddock – Defibrillator donation (Langford Manor owners) - £300
- d) Internal review – 2 of 4 – completed by LH (8 Nov 23)

4538 Matters of Report, Questions and Items for the Next Meeting

- a) The Somerset Rivers Authority consultation on a new flooding strategy for Somerset was open until 31 Dec 23. Further details could be found at srastrategy.co.uk

4539 Date for Next Meetings

Monday 8 January 2023 at 1830 at Village Hall, Stowey Road, Fivehead

The meeting closed at 8.46pm.

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