

Stoke St Mary Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Stoke St Mary Parish Council held on Thursday, 18th January 2024, at Stoke St Mary Village Hall at 7.30pm

Public Session

The new managers at the Half Moon Inn introduced themselves to the PC and outlined their plans for the pub. The PC committed to support in whatever way is possible.

23.67 Attendance and Apologies

Councillors Present : Cllrs Colin Fisher (Chair), Dan Fallance, Patricia Fallance (Vice Chair), Rob Hossell.

Apologies: Cllr Tania Watt (accepted)

In attendance: Cllr Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council)
Sarah Fisher, Clerk
Two members of public

23.68 Declarations of Interest – Cllr Fisher ref Item 23.74

23.69 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 16th November 2023, were circulated in advance of the meeting and these were approved and signed by the Chair.

23.70 Finance

a) Balances (as at 12/01/2024):

Current a/c: £795.32

Deposit a/c: £10,092.51

Cllr Hossell confirmed these balances as correct.

b) Expenditure approval:

Item listed on agenda was approved for payment.

23.71 Play Area

Clerk update – two generous donations received from Village Hall Committee and Tania & Graeme Watt. Chair proposed formal thanks to both. Also formal thanks to Jon Tarr for his support.

Grant applications have commenced. Specification is being revised to reduce project cost (considering cheaper timber options, re-siting of new fort to allow bark area to remain – cost of removing bark is c £5-7k).

Cllr Dan Fallance suggested Play Area Working Party group draw up “Plan B” in case funding not forthcoming.

The meeting was suspended at 8pm to receive an update from Cllr Sarah Wakefield; SC facing £100m deficit and is working hard to avoid bankruptcy, including negotiating with government to increase Council Tax by 10%. SC is likely to reduce highways expenditure to only those things that relate to safety. Services such as ditch clearing, gully emptying, sign cleaning, verge and hedge trimming, may have to be met by PCs. Still unclear which services these are and their costs.

Signed:  (Chair)

Date: 21/03/24

The meeting resumed:

23.72 Devolution of Services from SC

The PC acknowledge the need (in light of above) to raise a contingency fund to cover possible demands on PC as a result of devolution.

23.73 Budget Planning for 2024/25

Draft budget/precept document (ii) was circulated in advance of the meeting. This includes a contingency fund (see 23.72 above). The proposed budget/precept (ii) was approved, meaning an increase in the parish precept of £26.21 per annum, for the average household (Band D). The precept for 2024/25 will be £11,000.

23.74 Clerk's salary – the increase as per draft budget (23.73 above) was approved unanimously

23.75 Clerk's report/action list from previous meeting:

- a) Defibrillator/1st aid training – ongoing
- b) Debit card – application successful and card received
- c) Grounds maintenance contract to be fulfilled by Parsons Landscapes
- d) Clerk reported that donated funds had been transferred to reserve a/c

23.76 To receive reports from Parish Council Portfolios

Chair – Chair's report has already been circulated and is posted on website (stokestmary.info) and noticeboards.

Cllr Dan Fallance – as per report, in summary; **Village Hall** remains busy, and Committee have voted £5k donation to play area project. **Police** – mainly rural theft of farming/stock control electronics. **Traffic/roads** – damage to verges in Broughton Lane still outstanding. Damage to road outside Dairy House Farm – repairs have been carried out but badly done, with collateral damage in places. Airband are due back again soon. Increase of traffic to Higher Broughton Farm noted, caused by "satellite farming", feeding of stock, and complaints received regarding farmer's speeds in large agricultural vehicles through village. Clerk to write to Savills asking them to urge tenant to drive through village with care and caution.

Cllr Rob Hossell – as per report, in summary; **A358** on hold (DCO postponed), questionable as to whether project will go ahead as financial case is marginal. **Speed limits/Road signs/markings** – with limited funding, further progress unlikely. **Planning** – see 23.77 below.

23.77 Planning – Cllr Hossell advised no new applications received since last meeting.

Updates on recent applications;

- 37/23/0005 - Haydon Farm Barn, - approved 8/11/23
- 37/23/0008 – Champion Rise, Stoke St Mary, - a decision has yet to be made
- 37/23/0009 – Cherry Grove, Stoke St Mary – a decision has yet to be made

23.78 Clerk's hours

Nothing to report

23.79 Date of next meeting: Thursday, 21st March 2024 at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 9.04pm

Signed:  (Chair)

Date: 21/03/24