



## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held via Zoom

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

<b>Present</b>	<b>Sue Isherwood, Chair</b>	<b>Ros Wyke, Councillor</b>
	<b>Sue Reece, Councillor</b>	<b>Peter Bright, Councillor</b>
	<b>Jo Tucker, Councillor</b>	<b>Guy Timson, Councillor</b>
	<b>John Millbank, Councillor</b>	
<b>In attendance</b>	<b>Mark Smith, Website Administrator</b>	
	<b>Chris Harris, Clerk</b>	

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Graham Noel, Somerset County Councillor.

### 2. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

#### 2a Declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda

Cllr Wyke, as a Member involved in the consideration and determination of planning applications by Mendip District Council, declares that the views expressed by her at Parish Council meetings on any particular proposal are based on the evidence available to her at the time, and is provisional only. Cllr Wyke will not be bound by any recommendation made by the Parish Council on any proposal, and will consider any matter afresh in connection with any application which comes before her in her capacity as a Member of Mendip District Council, taking all further evidence into account.

No other declarations or written requests were received.

### 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were reviewed. Cllr Reece highlighted a minor error at Item 11b Payments to be made; Cllr Timson requested an addition to Item 13 Notices which had been omitted. In view of these changes the minutes will be resubmitted for consideration at the next meeting.

### 4. Website Update

4a Mark Smith presented the following update:

- SSL Certification has been implemented by Tickbox Marketing.
- The Change Control Policy has been published.
- The Privacy Policy and Notice have been published on the Parish Council / Governance webpage.
- The 'Editor's Tips' guidance document in the Community Pages has been updated.
- Advice about the Friendly Society webpage and documents has been given by email and phone.
- Cookie banner requirements to meet GDPR Regulations have been investigated alongside Tickbox Marketing. This was formally proposed by Cllr Timson and seconded by Cllr Reese and **approved** by Council.

4b The Draft Accessibility Statement has been produced, following the website adjustments made by Tickbox Marketing, and discussions with Claire Sully (Managing Director, Tickbox). This was formally proposed by Cllr Wyke and seconded by Cllr Isherwood and **approved** by Council.

4c The Chair discussed the possibility of a star map app being put on the website – Mr Smith will investigate options available.

Mr Smith left the meeting after his presentation.

### 5. Emergency Planning Committee Update

Cllr Reece gave her regular update on EPC activity.

- It is now 10 weeks since the EPC issued its first communication to the village in relation to the pandemic. Members continue to receive daily Government updates and regularly receive information from local government and members of the community. That said, new information is slowing down and the EPC has

consequently reduced the community email to 3 messages a week- on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, although any urgent updates will be notified as soon as they are received.

- Community letters from the Chair of the PC have been well received.
- The various Help Lines have still not been heavily used which may indicate that people are coping well; they will stay live as the ongoing situation may produce a need.
- The Friendship Line is currently in touch with 10 people and looking to extend the network by asking the people involved if they know of anyone else who might be interested. The Listening Line volunteers are liaising with a member of the community regarding their services. Unfortunately, regular Zoom meetings have not taken off as most people contacted were unable to access the service.
- The EPC continues to have a strong website presence, with Butterfly of the week and a poems page as well as the regular Coronavirus updates.
- The entries for the Poster Competition are displayed on the poles and in the shop.
- The grant offer from the WFS has been posted on the Parish Notice boards as well as online.
- The telegraph poles are being "adopted" and gradually getting destapled, with seeds planted round the base of those near Furlong Farm. There has been an offer to restore the bench in Drappel Lane and clear the area. Benches in The Square, and by the Post Office benches have been refreshed by local residents already, as has the phone box.
- The EPC continues with the view that its role is to inform people about government guidance but not to enforce it. There have been several conversations about residents disregarding official guidance and have advised that reporting to the police is only mandated in the most serious cases. So far complainants have been reluctant to do so. There have also been several conversations about what easing lockdown might involve.
- The EPC has collected 170 Mendip Wellbeing booklets from Health Connections Mendip to distribute around the village, plus an online version.
- Liaison with other local groups continues.
- At this time everything seems settled, and the village is continuing to make a concerted effort to stay safe.

Members thanked Cllr Reece for her report and again expressed their support, thanks and admiration for all those involved in the EPC and its services.

## **6. Update on impact of Coronavirus pandemic on Parish Council business**

6a Councillors discussed the current situation on the following matters.

**Robert Glanville Playing Field Trust:** Cllr Timson reported that maintenance has continued and that the field is ready for its RoSPA inspection which is due soon. Some enquiries have been received regarding use of the tennis and netball courts, which will remain closed until advised by the government. No news has been received regarding the grant application to the Somerset Community Fund.

**Village Hall:** Cllr Bright confirmed that Tony Shepherd is the new Treasurer. The hall has received £10,000 funding via MDC and is thus in a financially stable situation. Considerations have been given to cleaning protocols following future use, awaiting further advice from the government.

**Community Shop:** Cllr Reece presented an update from the Chair of the shop committee, Simon Reece.

- The Shop reports a significant uplift of trading and of its capital position.
- The Village has supported the Shop well and the April figures, the only whole Covid-affected month's data available at the moment, has shown an uplift of 25%. It is expected that May will be similar although very recent days are just possibly hinting at a drop off. It is hoped that the Village will continue to support 'Shop Local' as we return to normality. The ordering and delivery system has continued to perform and we are very grateful to the Parish Council for creating and sustaining the initiative. Work is in progress to merge this into the normal Shop's activities as we ease out of lockdown.
- The capital position has been enormously improved by the generosity of our major lender who has written off the outstanding debt of approximately £40,000. This will enable us to start repaying the bonds that villagers have lent much earlier than anticipated. Further, the Shop has received a Small Business Grant of £10,000 which will enable some essential maintenance and improvements to be undertaken. Both of these capital sums have swung the Shop into a secure state of on-going viability and brings forward the eventual moment when distributions from profits for community benefit can be made, the *raison d'être* of Community Benefit Societies.

**Funding:** The FS has yet to make a formal application to the PC for additional funding.

6b MDC's wildflower and rewilding policy.

Cllr Wyke outlined MDC's recent decisions regarding grass cutting, following reductions in service due to Covid-19, the impact this has had on the Mendip environment and the opportunities that this may now create. This is in addition to previously identified wildflower proposals to highlight and actively plant wildflowers across the District. Essentially, MDC will implement 'Eco Cuts' (ie twice yearly cutting) in the majority of areas it maintains, except where access and safety are priorities (such as some footpaths, cycle paths and vehicular lines of sight). This decision will be reviewed 6 monthly. Councillors broadly approved of this

decision so long as safety factors were fully taken into consideration. Councillors will also consider if there are any areas in the village which would be appropriate for such treatment.

## 8. Reports from the Somerset County Councillor and Mendip District Councillor

Cllr Noel, the Somerset County Councillor, had informed the Clerk that until lockdown is substantially eased, he will not be attending any parish council meetings as all information relating to the current situation is being circulated on a regular basis from SCC.

The Mendip District Councillor gave a brief summary of ongoing actions.

- Unfortunately but somewhat as expected, the Covid-19 R rate of infection has increased in Somerset and is currently above 1. While death rates are still relatively low, Cllr Wyke urged all members of the community to remain vigilant and adhere to government advice on social distancing, hand washing, etc. Weston hospital had been closed as a result of Covid-19 which had obvious consequences for the local community. (**Update:** phased reopening commenced 10<sup>th</sup> June.)
- The District and County Councils have been given responsibility for the roll-out of the track and trace activity, which are proceeding as planned.
- £26 million has been paid out so far to 2,400 local businesses to ensure their ongoing viability.
- Cllr Wyke gave further clarity to recent news concerning central government funding for pedestrian and cycling paths. MDC are pressing ahead with the pedestrianisation of various town centre areas, and while the money for county cycle paths is relatively small (c£600.000), all five bids submitted by MDC have been progressed to the next phase, an indication of the strength of the evidence in favour of safer routes in an area lacking continuous footpaths along any of its A road network.
- Cllr Wyke commented on the quality of Covid-19 reporting being provided by Somerset CC, although noted that the data was being provided from all of the district councils and this fact seems to have been overlooked in publication.

Councillors thanked the District Councillor for her report.

## 9. Clerk's Report

The only addition to matters not covered by Items on the Agenda was that the annual VAT return has been submitted.

## 10. Planning

### 10a Planning Applications considered:

2020/0873/HSE	Garage, Oak View, Roughmoor Lane, resubmission of application
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Councillors reviewed this resubmission. An email from the tenant of the property was read out and its contents noted. However, there was no change to the Council's previous position which was a unanimous **objection** on all grounds previously stated namely:

- A previous plan included an integral garage but this was subsequently changed to living space, providing instead a substantial residential property with two existing parking spaces;
- Overdevelopment of a restricted and rather awkward site;
- Further restrictions to vehicular sight lines from Roughmoor Lane, Stoke Road (A371) and from the site itself, on an already hazardous junction and traffic pinch point, potentially increasing the risk of serious accident.

2020/0967/TCA	Tree Works, 4 Bell Close
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Councillors noted the need for these works and **approved** this application.

### 10b The following MDC decision was noted:

2019/1989/FUL	Bridge, Free Hill Farm (approved with conditions)
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### 10c For general consideration/monitoring:

i)	2019/1549/FUL Agricultural Buildings, Top Road, amended application and Planning Officer's decision
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There had been no news of when this application would be heard by the Planning Board at MDC (to be held virtually), but the Chair emphasised the need for an appropriate presence at the meeting to support its earlier decision and those of some local residents.

ii)	2019/2336/FUL Shamrock Stables, amended application and any developments
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Again, there had been no news of when this application would be heard by the Planning Board at MDC. Enforcement was still collating information; while some reported that there appeared to have been fewer dogs on

site of late, others reported that disturbance from the barking was increasing again, indicating that they were being moved back from their satellite sites in other local villages.

iii) Land at Lynchcombe Lane, unauthorised occupancy and any developments

Cllr Reece confirmed that the owner would be vacating the site in September, in line with the current Enforcement Notice. Discussion continued regarding its potential as an allotment site for the village, although the limits to access were acknowledged. Costs are currently unknown as is the feasibility of crowdfunding although neither can be discounted at this stage. Councillors to continue to monitor the situation.

## 11. Finance

### 11a Payments to Note

The following payments from the coronavirus emergency fund were noted:

- Chris Harris, Zoom subscription (March and April) £28.72
- SALC advertising fee £234.00
- Tickbox annual hosting & domains £528.00

### 11b Payments to approve

The following payments were approved:

- Mark Smith, additional website services £361.00
- Tickbox Marketing for cookie controller installation £60.00
- Tickbox Marketing for cookie controller annual subscription £29.95

### 11d To note and discuss account balances as at 01/06/20:

The following balances were noted:

- Treasurer's Account £1,197.20
- Business Bank Account £24,500.00

### 11e Internal Audit 2019-20

The 2019-20 financials were submitted to Mrs Alison Cole acting as Internal Auditor and some amendments were made. Once these are clarified the requisite documentation for the External Auditors can be completed.

## 12. Parish Council Tree Strategy Proposal

Cllr Timson and Cllr Tucker reported back from the first meeting of the Tree Strategy Group. Interest in and support from the local community is strong and the Group is currently putting together a constitution and other policy documents. Cllr Wyke and the Chair both emphasised that clarity on its structure vis a vis the Parish Council ie, whether it will be a subgroup of the Council or a separate entity, needs to be clear from the outset as there are a number of implications for matters such as insurance and costs, etc. Cllr Wyke also suggested that the Group contact the Tree Officer at MDC for advice on best practice, etc. Cllrs Timson and Tucker thanked Cllr Wyke for her advice and suggestions and will advise the Group accordingly.

## 13 Court House Farm Footpath

Cllr Timson reported that he had been in touch with both the Church Commission and their representative at Strutt and Parker and that full access should be available soon. The majority of the existing path will be reinstated, with a couple of options currently being discussed for the necessary minor deviations due to the new building.

## 14. Footpath Report

Mr Colin Booth, the Footpath Officer, had submitted a written report and map on the condition of other footpaths in the area, summarised as follows:

- The field to the west of the church carries two paths: the main east-west path is WS 13/3, and the diagonal path is WS 13/2. At present they are both obstructed by a growing wheat crop. Tractor lines traverse the field, but mostly in a north-south direction. The paths require marking through the crop. Signs or waymarks are missing, and should be replaced.
- The field to the south-east of Lodge Hill Industrial Park is presently seeded with a maize crop, and again, the planting is generally against the route of the path WS 13/10. This path does carry signs at each end, but to avoid crop damage, it needs marking on the ground from sign to sign, to establish a clear route through the crop.
- WS 13/1, linked to 13/2 and 13/3, the Court House Farm path, is covered in Item 13 above.

Mr Booth has requested various waymarks and signage from Somerset CC Footpaths Officer; Cllr Timson agreed to talk to the tenant farmer of the land concerned regarding making the footpaths through the crops accessible.

**Action: Cllr Timson**

#### **15. Notices**

Cllr Bright noted that he had offered his resignation from the Council which had been accepted by the Chair. He was duly thanked for his prodigious efforts and sustained input over 14 years of dedicated service to the Council and local community and will of course be sorely missed for his knowledge and experience. Procedures concerning taking over his duties and responsibilities, as well as planning for a replacement, will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### **16. Items for Next Agenda**

- Councillors requested that the increase in litter and dog waste around the village, plus particular issues at Mortar Pits, be discussed at the next meeting.
- Cllr Millbank requested that speed limits through the village be reviewed, particularly in light of issues with motorcyclists. Cllr Wyke agreed to write to the police and will report back to the next meeting.
- Cllr Reece requested that an Item be included to discuss lockdown easement and its implications for tourist accommodation in the area, with attendant risks.

**17. Date of next meeting** – currently scheduled for Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 @ 7.30 p.m. as a virtual meeting via online conferencing facilities.

Signed electronically:  Chair of the Parish Council

**Date:**