

**Minutes of the Meeting of Meare Parish Council**  
**Held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 7.30pm in the Chapel**

**Public participation**

**Present:** Cllrs Bennetts (Chair), Field, C. Foster, T Foster, Gage, Hoskins, James, Neale, Richards, Winters, Wren and the Clerk Gerard Tucker

**In attendance:** 9 members of public. Cllr Heather Shearer.

Mr Joe Joseph made a short presentation on the 5 mile Food and Farming project that is focussed on parishes in and around Glastonbury. His presentation concluded with information on an open event in Glastonbury Town Hall on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March when there will be displays from different organisations involved with the project. Councillors were encouraged to attend.

Mr Ray Adlam spoke about the recently amended finger post at Burtle Road junction. This is an item on the agenda later, where the discussion is recorded.

**2022/23**

**154. Apologies**

Apologies were received from County Cllr Ros Wyke.

**155. Minutes of the previous meeting.** The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November were considered accurate were signed by the Chair.

**156. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Wren declared an interest in agenda item 7c, Village Hall draw down loan agreement.

**157. Summary of actions from the previous meeting**

- i. To inform Mendip DC of the locations for signs at Wheelwright Terrace a Farriers Close
- ii. Remove two fruit trees planted on the verge at Kirlegate
- iii. Obtain quotes for fencing the area behind each goal mouth at the playing field
- iv. The clerk to pursue guidance from SALC on the appropriate way to proceed with the Village Hall loan agreement.
- v. To produce a poster in support of a maintenance contract

**158. County and District Councillor reports**

Cllr Shearer informed that Mendip DC will cease to exist after 1<sup>st</sup> April and that staff are extremely busy ensuring that the transfer to a Unitary Authority is trouble free.

The County Council report included the difficulties associated with balancing the budget, whilst ensuring that essential services are retained. It appears that some £40m of savings have been made across all departments. Whilst the precept has not yet been set for the next year, the guidance received from central government is that Councils are encouraged to set their precepts close to the 5% ceiling. This will be decided by full council in the next few weeks.

The boundaries for the Local Communities Networks will soon be announced. It is possible that Meare will be in a cluster of Polden villages stretching west as far as Bawdrip.

**159. Highways** Cllr Field had undertaken the role of liaising with Somerset Forge and resolving the issue of the long sign pointing towards Highbridge and Burtle as requested. However, now the new finger has been installed, the fact that HIGHBRIDGE is replaced with H BRIDGE raised some concerns. Cllr Field was asked to contact Somerset Forge and arrange for the original sign to be returned to the parish. Cllr Hoskins proposed, seconded by Cllr Gage that a site visit be arranged to

discuss the offer from Ray Adlam to relocate the whole sign on to his land, allowing the reinstatement of the original directional post.

**Action required:** Organise a site visit.

#### **160. Parish Matters including:**

**Playing Field.** Edwin Hoskins provided copies of the preliminary results of consultation on the facilities provided in the parish and aspirations of young people. 36 response have been received to date. In summary:

- i. 25% of respondents do not use the existing facilities
- ii. 75% of respondents are dissatisfied with the existing facilities
- iii. 96% would be interested in a hard surface play area similar to a MUGA
- iv. 33% (13) people would be interested in joining a youth council
- v. 92% are interested in involving with local activities
- vi. 88% would attend fund raising events
- vii. 78% of respondents would be interested in a youth club

Edwin was thanked for his continued work and involvement in finding solutions to the provision of youth facilities in the parish.

##### **a. i: Fencing quotes for goal areas.**

The Clerk had previously circulated a report with three quotes for the purchase of fencing to be erected behind one of the goals at the playing field. Temporary Heras Fencing, permanent fencing from First Fence and similar from Jacksons Fencing were included. Cllr Gage proposed, seconded by Cllr Hoskins and unanimously **AGREED** to purchase 15m x 2.4m of fencing from First Fence at a cost of £1,194.63 plus VAT. Installation will have to be organised following delivery. The hedge will need to be cut back prior to installation and Cllr C Foster emphasised the need to locate the new fence close to the hedge, to allow for easier future maintenance. **Action required:** Clerk to purchase 15m of fencing

##### **ii: Gates for car park**

Cllr Bennetts had undertaken some research on the appropriate way to fence the car park to ensure the safety of both motorists and users. The cost of gates was mentioned and considered to be unsuitable due to the lower height. The clerk mentioned that he was aware of a pair of gates that are to be removed from Edgar Hall, Somerton and would enquire if they could be made available for this project.

**Action required:** Clerk to enquire about obtaining gates from Somerton TC

##### **b. Trench and fencing in the playing field - tenders.**

Cllr C Foster provided a specification for the work to pipe the ditch and erection of fencing. This is to be distributed to interested parties in anticipation of obtaining quotes for the works, which have to be completed prior to the end of February to ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed.

**Action required:** Circulate specification of works to prospective tenders.

##### **c. Draw down agreement with Village Hall for Public Works Loan.**

The clerk had previously been asked to obtain professional guidance on the appropriate way to proceed with the terms for releasing the loan to the Village Hall Committee. He presented a very thorough report which had been compiled with the guidance of six organisations. SW Councils, Somerset Association of Local Councils, Charity Commission, Society of Local Council Clerks, Somerset County Council (legal department), Shape Mendip (legal department).

The clerk was asked to undertake further research and produce a draft summary of appropriate actions to be presented to the Village Hall committee. This is to be completed in preparation for a meeting to discuss the recommendations to be held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February.

**Action required:** The clerk to summarise the findings of the recent study.

#### **161. To consider a draft maintenance contract tenders**

Tenders have been received from three sources each wishing to be considered for the recently advertised four year contract to maintain the public areas as defined in the specification of works.

- M&P Contracting Services
- Little Acre Gardening Services
- A Greenman Gardening.

Cllr Neale proposed, seconded by Cllr C Foster and **AGREED** by majority to reappoint M&P Contracting Services for the four year contract commencing in April 2023.

### 162. Precept for 2023/2024

The budget for 2023/2024 £50,100 had been agreed at the previous meeting. The item to determine the level of precept payment was deferred as the matrix for applying for the precept had not been released in time for the November meeting. The budget had been slightly amended to £51,000 to allow for the higher maintenance quote (if that was the one chosen by the Council) and to allow for the higher than previously calculated interest repayments for the loan. The increase to cover all of the approved budget from the precept would result in a 19.5% increase. After much debate, Cllr James proposed, seconded by Cllr Hoskins and unanimously **AGREED** that the precept for the following financial year be set at £48,000 which equates to a rise of 14.61%.

### 163. Finances

**a. Summary of account.** The clerk had previously circulated information on the transactions and balances of the council. No questions were raised, and Cllr Bennetts proposed, seconded by Cllr Neale and unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept the financial summary. 11-0-0

#### **b. Invoices paid since the last meeting**

Voucher number	Name	Details	Income	Expend £
SO 64	Gerard Tucker	Clerks salary (Nov)		837.75
DD 61	EDF	Playing field supply		28.00
	HMRC	VAT Refund	951.82	
DD	Ripple Accounts	Payroll (Nov)		10.00
60	Malcolm Sweet	Parish maintenance		70.00
62	Meare PCC	Hall hire		30.00
63	Malcom Sweet	Parish maintenance		240.00
65	Parish Magazine	Parish magazine contribution		250.00
SO 71	HMRC	NI & PAYE Oct - Dec		628.20
DD	EDF	Playing field supply		28.00
SO 68	Gerard Tucker	Clerks salary (Dec)		837.75
	Meare Allotments	Allotment Association annual rent	200.00	
DD 69	PWLB	Interest on loan		5,812.70
DD	Ripple Accounts	Payroll (Dec)		10.00
DD	Wessex Water	Rebate Playing Field	13.00	
70	ICO	Annual data protection fee		40.00

**c. Invoices to be paid.** Three payments were approved for processing

Payment	Amount £
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Malcolm Sweet	105.00
Clerks November - January expenses	288.29
Caroline Sanderson – Magazine edit	150.00

**164. Planning – 2022/2481/FUL Avalon Marshes Centre, Shapwick Road, Westhay. BA6 9TT** Change of Use from Agricultural land to ancillary overflow carpark with associated access. Erection of educational building. Discussion on this application identified a concern with the immediate neighbour on the amount of flooding and disposal of water from his property. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that a site visit be organised where councillors have the opportunity to observe for themselves the impact on this application.

**Action required:** *The clerk to organise a site visit at the Avalon Marshes Hub*

**165. Appointment of Internal Auditor**

The clerk informed of the difficulty in identifying a qualified person who is not known to the him, who could oversee the role of internal audit. He had sought the input of SALC who directed the council to Microshade who have set up an arm of their business to oversee internal audits. The clerk acknowledged the recommended cost of £195 + VAT is higher than the provision of services previously provided locally. However, to have a professional audit, together with support, identified through the county support organisation SALC is the clerk's recommended way to proceed. Cllr T Foster proposed, seconded by Cllr Beale and unanimously **RESOLVED** to employ the services of Microshade to undertake the internal audit.

**166. Correspondence.** No correspondence has been received which has not already been shared with Councillors.

**167. Summary of Actions**

- The clerk to organise a site visit at the junction of Burtle Road and Shapwick Road to review the recently amended finger post sign.
- The clerk to purchase 15m of fencing for installation at the playing field behind one of the goals.
- The clerk to enquire if the entrance gates at Somerton may be available. • The specification of works for fencing and drainage works at the playing field are to be circulated to prospective contractors.
- The clerk is to prepare a summary report of the recommendations of the professional organisations sought for guidance on the way to proceed if releasing the Public Works Loan to the Village Hall Committee.
- The clerk to organise a site visit to Avalon Marshes to view the site of a planning application

Meeting closed at 9.45pm.

The next meeting will be on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 7.30pm in the Chapel Signed

..... Dated ..... 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023

