

Minutes of the Meeting of Meare Parish Council
Held on Monday 20th November 2023, 7.30pm in the Chapel

Public participation

Ray Adlam informed the meeting that he had placed a vermin guard on the recently installed drainage pipe at the playing field. He also informed that he will install the new bin at the picnic area. The septic tank that he removed from the playing field is in his yard awaiting disposal. He will not be undertaking any additional tasks for the parish on completion of these. Mr Adlam continued and explained that over the many years he has lived in the parish he has always been very willing to give his time to help the parish in any way with a variety of parish projects. However the recent criticism and questioning of projects he has been involved with by some Parish Councillors has lead him to state that he is no longer prepared to offer his services.

Mark Swarfield spoke on behalf of a number of residents in the vicinity of Church Path and informed the council why he is opposed to the planning application to site a yurt at No 13, Church Path.

Present: Cllrs Bennetts (Chair), T Foster, Gage, Hoskins, James, Neale, Richards, Wren.

In attendance: Parish Clerk – Gerard Tucker.

Cllr Shearer – Somerset Council (from

8.20pm)

15 members of the public.

96. Apologies - Cllrs Field (family commitments) Winters and C Foster (unwell)
Cllr R Wyke – attending training.

97. Minutes of the previous meeting. Following a small amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2023 were signed by the chair as a true and correct account of the meeting.

Proposed Cllr T Foster - Seconded Cllr - Bennetts (8-0-0)

98. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made

99. Summary of actions from the previous meeting –

- Cllr Shearer to inform the point of contact at the Council for finger posts. *Completed*
- The Clerk to organise the purchase of a No Parking sign for Muddy Lane. *Ordered, not yet installed*
- The clerk to write to the occupant of 1 The Orchards. *Completed*
- Cllr James to remove the sign from the SID. *Completed*
- The clerk to inform how to report a pot hole to Somerset Council. *Completed*
- To proceed with obtaining a valuation of the war memorial *No progress as yet*
- The clerk to contact the NHS to determine the situation with the defibrillators *Completed*
- The clerk to write to Mr Adlam to thank him for his voluntary services to the council *Completed*
- The clerk and Cllr T Foster to produce a specification of works for the new car park *Unable to proceed until the soil has been removed*
- All councillors to work on resolving the moving of the soil heap at the Playing Field. *On-going*
- To revisit the asset register at a future meeting of the council *February 2024*

100. County Councillor Report Cllr Shearer said that the financial situation within the Council was causing considerable concern. The reasons for the difficulties included the high cost of adult social care and transport. Somerset has lower levels of household income than other more affluent counties and less Band D properties. A number of years of not increasing the council tax has contributed to the problem. Consideration is being given to disposing of commercial property investments. Cllr Shearer attended the remembrance day service at Meare and laid a wreath on behalf of the Council.

101. Highways Recently reported concerns with missing or damaged road traffic has met with some success. The sign at Honeygar Lane has been reinstated. Others concerns reported have yet to be resolved. Cllr Neale informed of the problems of:

- o A warning sign in the vicinity of Avalon Marshes facing the wrong way
- o A large pothole near Cold Harbour Farm
- o The deep gully along the verge on Glastonbury Road
- o The broken Road on Heathway Lane

102. Planning

a) Application Number: 2023/2019/FUL, 13 Church Path, Meare

There are considered to be a few inaccuracies in the supporting statement.

- a. The church is regularly used and is not redundant as stated. Indeed, we hold Meare Parish Council meetings in this building!
- b. The supporting statement informs that the application site is on the edge of the village! It is located in the very centre of the village.
- c. The supporting statement suggests that there is sufficient bus services for those coming to stay to use without therefore the need for a car. There are just three services per day, none into the evenings and those that are running are under threat of either reduction or closure.

Members agreed unanimously to object to this application for the following reasons.

1. Loss of privacy for those who live in surrounding properties. The yurt is currently located on an elevated platform, which allows the occupants clear views into the properties and gardens of neighbours.
2. The development is outside of the curtilage of the village as it is located some distance into the applicants garden.
3. Whilst not a material consideration, the yurt is/has been occupied and the levels of noise generated from the site is unacceptable. Being only canvas, with no sound proofing, all noise travels easily - this is unacceptable in this location.
4. Habitat clearance has been undertaken with a weed suppressant membrane applied across the majority of the garden. The loss of this natural habitat is considered a contravention of ecology policies.
5. Access to the property is narrow, has limited parking, crosses a public footpath and necessitates either reversing in or out of the site - as there is insufficient turning space.
6. The platform on which the yurt is located is 65 square metres. This is an enormous platform and is considered too large for the purpose that the applicant has applied.
7. There is an extremely large fire pit located with two metres of the neighbouring boundary. This is an ecological disturbance, creates smoke, ash and heat which is felt by the those living close to it. The noise generated by those using the fire pit is unacceptable.

Not all of the neighbours living adjacent to application site were informed of the application.

Finally, members were insistent that if this application is recommended by Officers for approval, that it is put before the planning board for their consideration

b) Application Number: 2023/2014/HSE. Beulah, Shapwick Road, Westhay
No objections to the application were raised. Councillors felt that the proposed development will provide a better working environment in the improved workshop facilities and unanimously supported the proposal. Proposed – Cllr Bennetts, Seconded Cllr T Foster (8-0-0)

103. Matters including:

- a. Playing Field update – as previously mentioned, the removal of the heap of soil needs to be given further consideration. There is no identified budget for this work, which has yet to be costed. It will require a licenced haulier who is compliant of all regulations, who can move the soil to a licenced site. Alternative ideas were discussed, yet with the ground now so wet, there is little that can be done until ground conditions improve.
- b. Parish survey. 232 replies have been received which represents 37% of the residential properties in the parish. The clerk has collated most of the responses regarding the parish magazine and provided an interim summary to the meeting. It is anticipated that the questions on housing and the village hall will be presented at the next meeting of the council in January.
- c. Website – diary function. Cllr Field has researched the diary function on Netwise. There is an annual licence fee cost of \$99. Cllr T Foster proposed, seconded by Cllr Gage and unanimously supported that the additional diary function is purchased. (8-0-0. There remains a notice board that is to be installed near the church hall.
Action – Cllr Richards to identify a preferred location and organise installation.
- d. Village Hall update. Paul Bradley informed that the transfer of funds from the previous trustees account has been successful. He further informed that the remainder of a grant provided by the former District Council has been received to the value of £15,000. Cllr Wren informed that there remains approximately £80 in the previous trustees account. This will now be transferred and the account closed.

104. Maintenance Contract – The clerk had previously circulated a summary of the maintenance of the parish, as undertaken by Malcolm Sweet. He informed that the contract had been prepared based on the relatively dry summer of 2022 and that the summer of 2023 had been much wetter, resulting in an increase in the amount of cuts required. Of particular note is the additional number of cuts to the cemetery and the picnic area. Cllr James challenged the accuracy of the detail provided, yet was unable to provide any evidence to support the claim. In conclusion, the maintenance contract is to be revisited in March 2024. Meanwhile, the clerk was asked to write to Malcolm Sweet and thank him for the work that he has undertaken to keep the parish looking good.

Action – Write to Malcolm Sweet to thank him for his input.

105. Grant application – Citizens Advice, Somerset

A letter from Citizens Advice Somerset has been received requesting a donation. Cllr Hoskins proposed, seconded by Cllr T Foster and unanimously agreed that a donation of £100 be awarded. (8-0-0)

106. Finances

a. Barclays Bank Account – Closure detail. The clerk explained that the inactivity of this account has resulted in Barclays closing it. Despite having changed the signatories to the account in May 2022, Barclays did not action the changes. To access the account requires the previous signatories to complete various forms, prove their identity and submit. The clerk has the necessary forms to complete.

Action – submit the forms to Barclays to regain access our funds

b. Presentation of income and expenditure

The clerk presented the income and expenditure to October, having previously distributed a spreadsheet detailing all financial transactions in the year. No questions were raised.

c. Summary of accounts

The clerk provided a summary of each of the accounts. It was noted that the Barclays funds are currently 'locked', with a plan to regain access yet to be instigated.

d. Invoices paid since last meeting

Name	Details		Income £	Expend £
Gerard Tucker	Clerks salary (Oct)			861.51
Ripple Accounts	Payroll			10.00
M Sweet	Village Maintenance (Oct)			500.00
EDF Energy	Monthly payment			28.00
Village Hall Trustees	Repayment of loan		2,000.00	
EDF Energy	Annual Standing Charge			98.21
J Linham	Additional Fencing required			211.70
G Tucker	Stamps			18.00
SALC	Playing Field Inspection training			50.00
EmPrint	Survey printing			199.78
Royal British Legion	Remembrance Wreath			85.00
HMRC	PAYE/NI			661.15

c. Invoices to be paid.

Gerard Tucker	Clerk's expenses, telephone and internet	25.99
Cllr J Field	Repayment of Netwise cost	141.14

107. To present a draft budget for 2024/25

The clerk presented a draft budget for 2024-25 which had previously been circulated to the Finance Committee. There were a few amendments raised, including the reinstatement of funds for a Speed Indicator Device. The clerk is to revisit the draft budget and present to the meeting in January when the precept for the following year will be agreed.

108. Correspondence:

Cllr Bill Revans has circulated a letter to all councils asking if parishes would consider contributing towards the financial costs of providing services.

109. Actions arising from this meeting

- Submit forms to Barclays Bank to regain access to funds
- Cllr Richards to identify an appropriate site for the notice board at the Church Hall and to arrange installation
- Clerk to write to Malcolm Sweet
- Clerk to write to Festive Lizards and explain the situation with the two defibrillators.
- Clerk to write to Alison Whitcombe and thank her and her team for maintaining the play area

110. Next meeting; will be held on Monday 15th January 2024, 7.30pm in the Chapel.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.35pm.