

Minutes of the Meeting of Meare Parish Council

Held on Monday 18th March 2024 7.30pm in the Meare Community Chapel

Public participation

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

In attendance: Parish Clerk – Gerard Tucker.
Cllr Wyke – Somerset Council
+ 16 members of public.

141. Apologies for absence. (LGA 1972 s85 (1))

Apologies were received from Cllr Neale and County Councillor Shearer.

142. Minutes of the meeting held on: Monday 19th February 2024 (LGA 1972 para 41(1))

The minutes had been previously circulated and with one minor amendment were considered a true and accurate record of the last meeting. 10-0-0

143. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

144. Summary of actions from the previous meeting

- The clerk and Cllr Gage to involve with improving the signage for the Westhay defibrillator. *Not yet completed due to poor weather conditions*
- Representatives from the youth of the village are encouraged to attend the next meeting *A report has been received.*
- To include on the next agenda an item to discuss the installation of additional equipment at the Play Area. *Included on the agenda*
- The clerk to borrow or purchase the appropriate materials to define disabled parking spaces at the Playing Field. *Materials now obtained, waiting for improved weather conditions.*
- Information to promote the Villager of the Year to be forwarded to all councillors. *Completed*
- The clerk/Cllr Wren to contact the Rights of Way Officers and request that the footpath to the allotments is improved. *Completed. Rights of Way to be included on the next agenda*
- The clerk to contact The Brightwell. *Completed*

145. Youth group update on fund raising activities.

An email received from the youth group was read to the meeting by Cllr Hoskins. The content included:

- The Youth Group has formed a committee consisting of 50% young people and 50% adults.
- They continue to raise funds and recently joined the village hall tabletop sale to raise funds towards a storage unit.
- The collecting of empty drinks cans continues as a fundraiser.
- A Youth event planned for last summer was rained off. It is hoped to deliver a similar event on the 11th May.
- A promotional event in the Church rooms will welcome young people aged 10 - 18 with their parents to find out what the young people would like us to commit funds towards and join us for table top games, socializing and signing up to a monthly youth event.
- We will be planning out next fundraiser for Summer 2024.

- We would like to approach the Parish council to permit us to have a storage container in the playing field to store equipment and games for the youth group we would like the parish

council to consider a grant to contribute towards the cost of a storage container as soon as possible.

It was reported that the Youth Group has raised in excess of £8,500 towards sports facilities in Meare.

146. County Councillor report:

Cllr Wyke informed that it has been difficult to create a balanced budget for the next financial year. This has resulted in towns and parish councils being encouraged to take responsibility for some devolved services. The majority of the budget is taken up with delivering Adult Social Care services and that is unlikely to ease in the future. Sadly, many staff and services are to close with redundancies being implemented on April 1st. A significant amount of economic funding has been attracted to the county from Central Government which amounts to more than £110m over five years. The continued wet weather has resulted in a significant amount of additional work for council staff. Sadly, Somerset is being identified as a n insurance flooding area, with an increase in premiums. Cllr Wyke informed of a protest at County Hall where paint was daubed on the walls by Palestinian support groups in protest at organisations that support the stance taken by Israel.

147. Highways

Councillors raised a concern regarding the number of simultaneous road closures that took place recently. The clerk was asked to write to Mike O'Dowd Jones head of Highways at Somerset Council and raise the concern with him.

Action: The clerk to write to Somerset Highways

The sign at Wheelwrights Terrace has still not been resolved. The developer is waiting for the specification from Somerset Council. The clerk continues to try and resolve this issue.

Cllr Field informed that the Highbridge/Burtle finger from the post on Shapwick Road is still in her garage. The clerk is to try again to contact Somerset Highways to obtain guidance.

Action: The clerk to contact Somerset Highways with regard to the finger post.

The drains at Stileway corner remain blocked and cause flooding issues. Also reported is the state of the road between Stileway and Coldharbour.

Action: The clerk to report both concerns to the Highways Authority.

148. Annual summary of the parish maintenance contract

The Chair introduced this item and informed that M&P Contracting have undertaken the first year of a four year maintenance contract in the parish. Whilst it has been noted that there has been additional works in some locations, there has not been a request from the contractor for additional funds. The Clerk enquired if there were additional areas that may need attention by M&P Contracting – no suggestions were made. In preparation for the future, there may be a requirement for the contract to be amended to cover the cutting of St Mary's Churchyard should Idverde not retain their existing contract with Somerset Council. Cllr Hoskins offered to maintain the area near the Meare defibrillator.

Cllr Bennetts proposed, seconded by Cllr T Foster and unanimously **AGREED** that the clerk continues to liaise with M&P Contracting. 10-0-0.

Endorsement of the work of M&P Contracting was proposed by Cllr C Foster, seconded by Cllr Wren and **AGREED** by majority. 9-0-1

Proposal:	Erection of single storey side extension and internal alterations to the existing holiday let
Location:	River House, Porters Hatch, Meare
Applicant:	Mr K Turland
Application Type:	Full Application

Councillors had previously had the opportunity to visit the application site. Discussion resulted in a suggested condition that when promoting the holiday let, that visitors understand that there is only one car parking space allocated to the site. Cllr C Foster proposed, seconded by Cllr Wren and unanimously **AGREED** 10-0-0.

Planning 2024/0385/CMP

Proposal:	Prior notification for a 60 day temporary recreational campsite
Location:	Station Farm, Shapwick Road, Westhay, Glastonbury
Applicant:	Mr Karl Dyga
Application type:	Prior approval – temporary campsite

This application was forwarded to the Parish Council for information only. The decision will be taken by Officers.

150. To receive and discuss a draft Grants Policy

There is seemingly additional financial pressures on support organisations, resulting in an increase in requests for financial assistance from the Parish Council. A draft Grants Policy was presented to the council, with the suggestion that all grant applications are considered in September each year. Cllr Richards proposed, seconded by Cllr Winter and unanimously **AGREED** that the grants policy be adopted and reviewed annually in September. 10-0-0

151: Request to consider the recording of meetings.

Cllr Hoskins requested that Parish Council meetings are recorded. The purpose is to have an accurate record of the meeting to assist with the preparation of the minutes. Cllr Field informed that it is possible to use existing equipment and that she was prepared to undertake some additional research. Cllr Bennetts informed that the Standing Orders would need to be changed and The Clerk informed that to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) a statement would have to be made on the agenda informing that the meeting was being recorded. This item is to be presented again at a future meeting.

152: To discuss the Monitoring Officers recommendation for additional Councillor training

In response to complaints received, the Monitoring Officer recommended that Councillors should undertake some additional training. A consultancy company was identified and the Clerk had obtained a quote for an in person trainings session of 1.5hours. The cost of this training was quoted at £995.00 +VAT. Councillors considered this excessive and suggested that the clerk look at alternative sources of training.

153: Use of emails and email etiquette.

The Clerk raised an observation that there was a tremendous amount of email traffic generated between Councillors that was unnecessary and was filling the ‘in boxes’ of many devices. He asked if councillors could ask themselves two questions before pressing the send button – 1. Do I need to include everyone in this email? 2. Before using ‘reply all’ facility, should you respond only to the person/people to whom the message applies?

Action: Obtain costs, review Standing Orders and revisit this subject at a future meeting

154: Parish Matters including:

- a. Playing Field update
 - i. An update on the removal of the soil. The previous offer received from Mr Graham has been withdrawn Cllr Gage is still looking to resolve this and continues to contact local companies. Cllr T Foster provided a name and contact details for Cllr Gage to pursue.
 - ii. To discuss additional play equipment. Cllr Hoskins has researched equipment that would be suitable for young people under school age. The prices of various items was presented, varying between £2,500 and £4,200 plus installation. Tim Hoskins has repaired the access gate to the play area. His efforts in undertaking this work was acknowledged and appreciated.
- b. Village Hall: Rosie Lander informed that they had recently held the agm and an open of the Trust. In total 25 people attended. A project lead and an operations lead have been identified. A £20,000 grant from the former Mendip DC has been secured. A Quantity Surveyor has been appointed and estimates that the build costs are between £1.5 and £2m. A revised business plan, action plan and budget is being prepared. Monthly meetings have been set, with alternative meetings being open to the public. Encouraging community engagement will help potential funders recognise the importance of supporting Meare Village Hall.

155. Finances a. Presentation of income and expenditure to include:

Payments made since the last meeting

1 st March	G Tucker – Salary (Feb)	£907.59
18 th March	Ripple Accounts – payroll	£ 10.00

Payments to be approved and paid

18 th March	Netwise	£ 86.40
18 th March	Meare Community Church Hall hire	£ 60.00
18 th March	Caroline Sanderson Mar magazine edit	£150.00
18 th March	Malcolm Sweet – March maintenance	£500.00
18 th March	Clerk’s expenses	£140.15

Receipts since the last meeting

No receipts

Note: £15,841.00 transferred to Co-operative Business Select Account on 29th February 2024

Budget Monitoring

A budget monitoring summary was circulated prior to the meeting, with an explanation for the reasons the budget had been exceeded in seven headings (mainly due to the use of ear marked reserves). There were no questions raised.

Bank Reconciliation

As at 29th February the Co-operative Business Select Account contained £237,646.11 and the Co-operative Direct Plus Account contained £28,358.15 A total of £265,919.26

156. Correspondence

A request for funding has been received from Victim Support. The Clerk is to respond informing that grant applications are considered in September each year.

157. Actions arising from this meeting

- The Clerk to write to Somerset Highways and raise a concern regarding simultaneous road closures.
- The Clerk to try and obtain guidance on the finger post on Shapwick Road
- The Clerk to report again the blocked drains and poor road surface near Stileway
- The Clerk to pursue the installation of a sign at Wheelwrights Terrace

158. Next meeting will be on Monday 15th April 2024, 7.30pm in Meare Community Chapel

The meeting was declared closed at 9.40pm.

