

LEIGH ON MENDIP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held at Memorial Hall on Monday 16th October 2023, starting at 7:00pm

Present: Cllrs Iain Kirby, Vicki Taylor (Chair), Estelle Kirby.

Attending: Philip Ham and Barry Clarke (left early) – (Somerset Council); Joe McGhee (Clerk);
2 members of the public - Tom Kemp (Tree Officer – left early), Carol Susan Sweet
(councillor candidate – left early).

1 Welcome by the Chairman

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr Martin Carter, Cllr Paula Freeland.

3 Absent

There were no absences.

4 (a) To receive declaration of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda.

(b) To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests

Cllr Martin Carter has a written request for dispensation in relation to Leigh on Mendip Recreation Association for four years (June 2027). Cllr Vicki Taylor has a written request for dispensation in relation to Leigh on Mendip War Memorial Hall for one year (June 2024)

(c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

There were no requests for dispensation.

5 Public Session

One member of the public was present, Tom Kemp (Tree Officer). There were no remarks from the public at this point.

6 Councillor Co-option

(a) The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the process for co-option meeting and voting as described in Attachment 1.

(b) Cllr E Kirby proposed the co-option of Carol Susan Sweet as councillor. Cllr I Kirby seconded. The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously by a show of hands to co-opt Ms Sweet as councillor. She signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting as a councillor.

7 County Councillor Reports

Cllr Ham of Somerset Council gave a verbal report. He commended Cllrs I and E Kirby for their work in liaising with Halecombe Quarry resulting in a generous donation to a group delivering services in Leigh on Mendip. The Shepton LCN meeting is due to take place on Wednesday, 18th October. The Head of Planning for Somerset East, the former Mendip DC area, left on Friday 13th. Concerns continue regarding Longcross crossroads, with little positive response from Somerset. Cllr Ham will be visiting local quarries along with the Somerset Council Chief Executive on 25th of the month. The Council were asked to forward to Cllr Ham any concerns regarding Aster Homes and the conditions of their properties.

Cllr Barry Clarke (Somerset Council) joined the meeting.

Cllr Clarke spoke of the difficult financial situation Somerset Council finds itself in, with progressively greater shortfalls predicted. The Chief Executive has experience of dealing with such a situation and actions are being developed.

Somerset will not benefit from savings from the cancellation of part of the HS2 project.

The involvement of the Enforcement Office in relation to several developments which don't seem to have gone through the full planning process was discussed.

8 Monthly update from Tom Kemp – Parish Tree Officer

Further discussions were had on the plans for tree planting at Park Hayes (discussed in the previous meeting). Tom Kemp will refine the plans and do a costing, prior to an open meeting early in the new year.

The Clerk will forward (to Tom Kemp at chrysalislandscaping@yahoo.co.uk) an email from Simon James Ltd offering to replace a damaged tree at Apple Meadow View with one of the Council's choosing. TK to consider and propose best option. Clerk to inform Simon James Ltd.

It was mentioned in discussion that approximately half the ash trees in the parish have suffered from die back.

9 To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 25th September, previously circulated (Attachment 2).

The council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 25th September. They were signed and dated by the Chair.

10 Matters arising from the minutes but not on the agenda

An update was provided by Cllrs E and I Kirby on a community liaison and fund meeting with Halecombe Quarry. The quarry had provided a generous donation to allow the procurement of additional equipment under the Jumpstart scheme. They will continue to liaise with the quarry regarding parking at Park Hayes. Steve Bosley or Andy Cadell were identified by Somerset councillors as possible contacts. During the discussion mention was made of the dangerous nature of the roads at access to the quarry and the lack of warning signage.

Cllr Taylor mentioned the issue of footpaths, including the need for a clear listing of priority footpaths and change from stiles to kissing gates to assist less able-bodied walkers. This will be an item for the next agenda. The Somerset Council footpaths officer, Chris Cudmore, will be invited to the meeting.

Cllr Taylor reported on speaking to a resident about a number of issues – concerns over footpath access, burning of horse manure, damming of a stream. Assurance was given that a gate providing footpath access would be kept open. Cllr Sweet will make enquiries to the Environment Agency with regard to damming of streams.

Cllr Sweet left the meeting at this point.

11 Planning Applications – If other planning applications are received between the date of this notice and the date of the meeting, they may be considered

No planning applications were received.

12 Planning Applications – Responses to be noted from Somerset Council

(c) 2023/0211/FUL Creation of access and associated track. Grove Shute Farm, Towns End Lane, Leigh on Mendip. **Decision** Somerset Council granted approval.

(d) 2023/1447/HSE Detached double garage, 15 Apple Meadow View, Park Hayes, Leigh on Mendip. **Decision** Somerset Council granted approval.

13 Be Resolved / Discussion

(a) Discussion on complying with the Biodiversity Duty (see Attachment 3).

A discussion was held on biodiversity duty.

Tom Kemp spoke on the topic and noted that the involvement of the farming community is crucial. He noted an example of the RSPB buying a farm (Hope Farm) and operating it as a profit while managing to focus on biodiversity; there is a lot of useful information on this.

It was noted that the Council has a responsibility for awareness and education of parishioners on biodiversity. Tom Kemp will draft an update to his job description as Tree Officer to incorporate biodiversity specifically. The open meeting to be scheduled on tree planting at Park Hayes will now incorporate consideration of biodiversity. Members of the farming community will be specifically invited.

The action on Cllr E Kirby to liaise with the primary school will incorporate biodiversity duty. An action will be placed on Somerset Council to send someone appropriate to talk to the Council on biodiversity; Cllrs Ham and Clarke will try to identify a responsible contact within Somerset Council. One contact suggested by them in the discussion was Cllr Dixie Darch, the Associate Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change.

Cllr Clarke and Tom Kemp left the meeting at this point.

- (b) Blocked river by creation of a dam.**

Covered above.

- (c) Hedge cutting in the cemetery.**

It was noted that pruning of the hedges and other foliage could compromise a wall in the cemetery and so no action will be taken on this for the time being.

- (d) Combining Council Clerk and Cemetery Clerk roles.**

Clerk will update his job description to incorporate the role of Cemetery Clerk and propose this at the next meeting.

- (e) Confirmation of positions for finger post and road sign to allow communication with Sara Davis (Traffic Engineer) to be concluded (Attachment 4).**

This was deferred until the next meeting when Cllr Carter can be present.

14 Formal approval of grant from SALC

The grant offer from SALC was approved and signed by Clerk and Chair. Clerk to forward the form electronically to Chair so that end date can be agreed and added to the form; Clerk will then return to SALC with bank details.

15 Clerk's / Councillors Report

- (a) Meeting regarding Barns Close Quarry arranged for 6:15 on 20th November.**

Noted. Clerk to send on email correspondence to Cllr Taylor to clarify.

- (b) Email to Unity Trust in response to request to confirm that Leigh on Mendip Parish Council should be covered under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.**

Email confirmation received by Clerk that the Council is covered under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme should Unity Trust Bank fail. Clerk will confirm this further by telephone.

- (c) Engagement proforma received from appointed internal auditor, Eleanor Greene.**

Proforma signed and will be returned to Eleanor Greene.

- (d) Update from Cllr Estelle Kirby and Paula Freeland on the planning application for the area of land being considered for the new Cemetery.**

Cllr E Kirby confirmed that all information has now been collated and she will meet Cllr Freeland (meeting expected to be on Friday 20th October) to finalise and submit (Council delegated authority to Cllrs Kirby and Freeland to submit).

16 Finance

Quarterly budget review (Attachment 5).

Bank reconciliation (Attachment 6).

Bank Balances as at: 30th September 2023

Current Account £8,811.37

Reserve Account £9,583.86

Receipts

Payments

(a) Unity Printwork - £50.00 – paid on 29.09.23

(b) Unit Trust quarterly service charge - £18 – taken by DD on 30.09.23

(c) SALC/NALC affiliation fees – £158.23

(d) Clerks salary October (includes 6 hours handover time) - £344.40

- (e) HMRC income tax October - £86
- (f) Clerk's expenses (working from home) October - £6.50
- (g) Idverde churchyard grass cutting September - £113.53

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the above payments and receipts.

17 Correspondence to be noted

- (a) Police and Crime Commissioner's Mendip Councillor Forum – forwarded 19.09.23
- (b) Halecombe Quarry Local Liaison Group Meeting and Community Fund Meeting - forwarded 20.09.23
- (c) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council support for Climate and Ecology Bill (from Zero Hour group) – forwarded 06.10.23
- (d) Recruiting and Retaining Councillors (from SALC) – forwarded 06.10.23
- (e) Shepton LCN Agenda – 18.10.23 – forwarded 06.10.23
- (f) Councillor Training Events(Nov/Dec), from SALC – forwarded 06.10.23
- (g) Live Consultation – Equalities Objectives, Somerset Council – forwarded 10.10.23

18 Matters to report / items for next agenda

It was noted that David Sparkes is standing down as manager of the Village Rangers. Cllr Taylor will send a card of thanks for his efforts on behalf of the Council and ask to be told who will be his successor.

19 Date and time of next meeting: Monday 20th November, 2023 in the Memorial Hall starting at 7.00pm.

Meeting closed 8.50pm